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# ANANDAMAYEE MA

## (AS I HAVE KNOWN HER)

NAREN CHOWDHURI

SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE CHARITABLE SOCIETY
VARANASI

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1978

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NAREN CHOWDHURI

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# PREFACE

Shree Anandamayee Ma was born in Bengal and lived there for over thirty-three years. Naturally, she has numerous devotees and admirers in Bengal. Hence, I wrote a book in Bengali under the title MAYER LILA-KATHA. But in view of the fact that MA has at present a fast-growing vast number of devotees and admirers outside Bengal and even in foreign countries (U.K., U.S.A., Canada, Germany, France, etc.), I have produced this book, which is virtually a free English translation of the Bengali book.

The purpose of the book is two-fold. Firstly, I am sure that the book will afford unalloyed delight to countless devotees and admirers of MA all over the globe. Secondly, I honestly believe that the detailed accounts, given in the book, of MA's important roles of both Saviour and Purifier in my long, eventful life will generate in many readers residing in States and countries outside Bengal, genuine attraction and reverence for MA, and therefore, for Almighty and Merciful God and thereby secure for them easy deliverance from difficult and trying

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situations and total freedom from embarrassing human weaknesses, enabling them to lead healthy, peaceful, contented and happy lives, both individual and collective.

May MA's benign benedictions help the book fulfil the two-fold purpose !

Kalyani, West Bengal
29th April 1978

**Naren Chowdhuri**

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This photo was taken in New Delhi
on 31st March 1937.
Description on p. 17-18.

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CHAPTER 1

## SIX DAYS IN NEW DELHI

( 26th to 31st March 1937 )

My first *darshan* of *Ma* came about on the day of *Holi*, 26th March, 1937. In the previous evening, I got the welcome information that Shri Anandamayee Ma had come to New Delhi and was staying in a tent, pitched in the compound of No. 13 Cantonment Road, occupied by Shri Panchanan Mukherjee. Just seven or eight days previous to that date, I was having a talk with an elderly devout lady (*) at the upper flat that my family was then occupying on Hanuman Road. I was telling her regretfully that I had travelled in so many places and had come across a good many renowned *mahatmas*, but had so far not seen a single *mahatma*, at whose feet I could rest my head and be care-free. She said, "We have seen Ma Anandamayee at Simla. I am sure you will find her to your liking. She will

* Shri Jogamaya Devi, wife of Shri (now Late) Priyanath Banerji, an official under Central Government.

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be coming to New Delhi shortly. I shall send you information as soon as she will arrive."

On receiving that information, the very next morning, we (myself and my wife Juthica, whom I shall subsequently refer to as Mrs. C) went along Cantonment Road. As we proceeded, we were overtaken from behind by Shri Sudhir Gupta, who had already seen MA and had been attracted by her. By 7-30 a.m., all three of us entered the tent in which MA was staying. There I saw MA, clad in immaculate-white, with no ornaments on her body, her long, dark hair dishevelled and sitting still like a marble statue. My eyes were gratified to have a clear vision of MA's enchanting form, radiant with a mysterious, divine glow. I sat motionless, amazed and almost paralysed, at a corner of the tent with my unblinking gaze glued on MA's exquisitely beautiful face. I sat there for nearly three hours, wondering all the while that I had never seen such an abundance of grace, sweetness and rare effulgence, all harmoniously built into a single human body. A small group of singers (Bholanath† was in the group) was singing *keertan* before MA. But very little of the music ever entered my benumbed ears and bewildered mind.

† MA's husband.

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At about 11 a.m. MA came out of the tent, went to the open court-yard behind Shri Mukherjee's house and mirthfully played *Holi* with ladies and girls assembled there, besmearing one another (as is customary) with coloured powders. We males could hear from the tent the melodious mixed voices of hilarious ladies and girls, taking active parts in the colour-throwing game going on under MA's leadership.

Close upon midday, MA came out to the front of the house and put coloured powder on all men, who came across her way, one after another. When she came near me, in her sweet, charming voice, she put to me the question, 'May I put coloured powder on you ?' I was simply overwhelmed by this unasked-for grace. Without waiting for my reply, she rubbed on my fore-arm a corner of her *chaddar* (textile wrapper), which had been sprinkled over with coloured powder. In this process, I received on my left fore-arm a direct touch of MA's right fore-arm. Immediately and almost automatically, I bent down, placed my head right on MA's feet and bowed down to her, pouring out my heart, as it were, and mentally prayed as follows : "Dear *Ma*, why do you put colour only on my body ? Pray colour my inner heart as well."

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Later, looking inside, I felt that gracious MA did indeed grant my earnest prayer.

Before I returned home that day, Shri Sudhir Gupta put to me the question, 'How did you find MA ?' Without a moment's thought, out came my ready reply. "In her", said I, "I saw Ramkrishna Paramhansa Dev himself. I used to say to *Thakur* (Ramakrishna Dev),—'*Thakur*, you came down on Earth, lived and departed, but unfortunate as I am, I could never see you.' That remorse of mine is no more".

From that day onward and continually for six days, I could not at all attend the educational institution I had founded and was running at Connaught Place. Due to MA's irresistible attraction, I felt compelled to spend daily, as long hours as possible, in MA's enchanting company. Normally, I could not help attending the institution for several hours even on Sundays and other holidays—so intense was my devotion to duty. But for these few days, the unrestrainable desire for enjoying MA's sweet and charming company totally triumphed over my wonted devotion to mundane duties.

I noticed that countless persons fell as helpless victims of this intensive and overpowering attraction of MA. Among them

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were numerous Bengali government officials of Simla and Delhi, of all grades,—high, medium and low,—Haran Babu (Rai Bahadur), Sudhir Sarkar, Durgadas Babu, Charu Babu, Jiten Dutta, Pankaj Sen and others, reputed gentlemen of U. P. and Punjab, also Kashmiri Pandits and their mothers, wives and children. My elder daughter Chhabi (then fourteen years old) and her mother too came under the spell of this overwhelming, hypnotic attraction.

What is the mystery about this attraction ? This attraction simply compels hundreds of persons—boys and girls, teen-agers and youths, grown-ups, elderly and old people—irrespective of age, sex, caste, creed or social status—to come to MA and remain in her company for long hours. So, it was this all-pervasive, heart-tearing and compelling attraction that easily led me to the conclusion that MA and Krishna (*) were identical.

For these days, our (my and Mrs. C's) program (and Chhabi too was with us on many occasions) was to stay in MA's company for as many hours as possible belween 7 a.m. and midnight (or even 1 or 2 a.m. at night). I had

* 'Krishna' means 'one who attracts'.

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the idea that in those days (now, I believe, for all time) MA never needed any sleep. Every night, however, she lay down quietly for two or three hours only to give those of us, who could not do without some sleep, an opportunity to have a two or three hours' short nap.

For the first three days, Mrs. C and I returned home after mid-day, took hurried meals and came back to MA's tent before 2 p.m. (or 3 p.m. at the latest). Of course, I alone would go back home in the evening once more to offer sweets and water to Gopal, whose brass image was installed on an altar in our Puja-Room, and also to cursorily look after our children, left at home, and then return to MA's tent by 8 p.m. On the fourth day, MA's noble host, Shri Mukherjee, said to me, "You both go back home at mid-day only to take your meals. From today, you need not go home for meals ; you will partake of MA's *prasad.* Most gratefully we accepted the kind offer. Thus, for the last three days of MA's stay in New Delhi, we had the opportunity of enjoying MA's fascinating company almost uninterruptedly for over sixteen hours out of twenty-four.

Of course, we could not have MA in her tent for all those long hours. Almost every

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evening, MA would go out on a drive by car. In the morning too, she would, on invitation, visit some devotees' residences, for an hour or two. During MA's absence from her tent, we would play the game of *Sat-chit-ananda* ( * ), and would either engage ourselves in *keertan* (singing God's name), if we won or else quietly do *japa* (silent repetition of God's name), if we lost.

The game was (so far as my memory goes) something like this. Several persons could take part in the game at the same time. Seven *cowries* (†) were used in the game. Every one of those, who joined in the game, had to take seven *cowries* in one hand and throw them on the floor. If, by chance, all the seven *cowries* fell on their backs, the thrower became a winner. Every one could attempt the throw *three* times. Those who failed to have all the seven *cowries* fall on their backs, even through three attempts, were *losers*. At the end, the winners would

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* *Sat-chit-ananda* literally means 'Truth-Knowledge-Bliss'. It is an epithet for Supreme God.

† *Cowries* are small, empty, dry sea-shells, which are available in abundance on sea-shore at all sea-side towns like Puri, Waltair, etc. They were once in use all over India as coinage of very low value.

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take part in *keertan* to be performed in chorus. The losers would have to sit down quietly and practise *japa*. Thus, through this ingenious game (devised by MA herself), at least a part of the crowd of people, assembled in MA's tent, would be kept profitably engaged in either *keertan* or *japa*. So waste of time on worthless gossips or discussions was avoided.

To encourage her children, MA herself would sometimes join in the game. A very curious thing I noted was that MA would every time have the seven *cowries* arranged irregularly on the palm of her right hand and throw them on the floor without any special care. But she was always a winner at the very first attempt. It seemed that even the lifeless *cowries* could not help obeying her compelling will.

I shall now briefly narrate some of MA's movements and activities, as I observed them during these six momentous days.

One morning, MA asked Biren (son of Durgadus Babu) to go home and bring his father to meet her. She told him to inform her promptly as soon as his father arrived. After a while, Biren returned to MA's tent and reported the arrival of his father. Durgadas

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Babu was a bulky elderly man, suffering from rheumatism. On hearing about Durgadas Babu's arrival, MA instantly lay down on the floor and completely covered herself from head to foot with her *chaddar* (wrapper), pretending that she was sleeping. When Durgadas Babu entered the tent and found MA lying down, completely covered, he expressed pretended anger and loudly cried out to MA : "You, naughty girl, dare you play such a trick with me ?" Saying this, he pulled out MA's covering with one hasty jerk. MA immediately burst out 'Ha-ha-ha-ha' and sat up to the great surprise and delight of all who were present. Next, eager to touch MA's feet in obeisance, Durgadas Babu bawled out, "Ma, don't you know that I am a rheumatic and cannot bend down ? Please raise your feet a little, so that I can touch them". Affectionately indulgent to her children as MA always is, she raised her feet a little and thus obliged and satisfied the boisterous elderly child.

One evening MA had been to the residence of Pinakpani Babu, an old devotee. I was there. Pinakpani Babu made to MA the following remarkable submission,—"*Ma*, Paramhansa Dev had taken charge of Girish Ghosh ; you do

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kindly take charge of me". MA replied, "*Baba* ( * ), how many Girish Ghoshes' charge did Paramhansa Dev take ? How many persons are there, who have the burning faith that Girish Ghosh had ?"

On this trip to New Delhi, MA was accompanied by Bholanath, Swami Akhandananda[1], Bhaiji[2], Gurupriya Didi[3] and Jatish Da (Jatish Guha), an advocate of Calcutta.

One day, MA, with a group of devotees went by bus to Okhla. Another day, MA and her party visited Government Dairy at Pusa. Swami Akhandananda had a great desire for having a trip with MA by æroplane. So, one day, MA had a few minutes' joy air-travel in the company of Bholanath and Swami Akhanda-

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* *Baba* literally means 'father' or 'daddie'. It is an accostation of endearment. Probably, "My dear child' should be equivalent to *Baba*, in cases like this.

[1] Originally, Dr. S. M. Mukherjee, Retired Civil Surgeon. He renounced the world and became a *sannyasi* under the name Swami Akhandananda.

[2] Originally, Shri J. C. Roy, I. S. O., high government official. He renounced the world and was the first and foremost devotee of MA.

[3] Daughter of Swami Akhandananda, the foremost of MA's lady devotees, who lived with MA for many years and intimately served her. Seventeen parts of her Diary are already printed in Bengali.

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nanda. One afternoon, local ladies entertained MA with *keertan* for over three hours at the Gurudwara. Another evening, the New Delhi *Keertan* Party, led by Haran Babu, Sudhir Sarkar and others and accompanied by Bholanath, sang *keertan* enthusiastically in MA's presence, in the hall of the Hindu Mahasabha, for over four hours.

During the first four days, I noticed that every evening, some or other devotee would take MA for a motor-drive. Usually, the owner of the car, his wife and two or three more old devotees of MA would accompany her on these drives. On the fifth day, strangely enough, I had a strong desire for accompanying MA on that day's motor-drive. I had no car. So, my desire for going on a motor-drive with MA was as absurd as the fantastic desire of a child to reach the moon. But my desire grew so strong that just when MA was about to leave for the drive, I became literally desperate. So, taking my daughter Chhabi by hand, I came outside and stood on the footpath, just where the car was waiting for MA. I noticed that the car was already filled with devotees, who were eager to go on the drive in MA's company. As soon as MA came and stood near the waiting

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car,—it seemed that I had lost my mental balance,—I spoke out in Hindi, '*Ma, ham to-mara sath aj jayenge*' (Ma, I shall go with you today). MA also replied in Hindi, '*Achcha jaiga hoega to jaoge*' (Well, you will go if there is room). After this, MA said to the occupants of the car, "You go with me daily ; you will get down ; today these persons will go". When the car was thus vacated under MA's order, MA herself sat on the right side of the inner seat, and at MA's instance, I occupied seat in the middle, while a new American devotee sat on my left. As there was no more room, I made my daughter Chhabi sit on my lap. On the front seat, as I distinctly remember, Bholanath sat by the side of the car-driver.

With MA and her party as described above, the car first entered the spacious compound of the bungalow, occupied by Rai Bahadur Deven Chatterjee (*). The compound was tastefully adorned with lofty, shady trees and brightly blossoming marigold and other flower-beds. On a green grassy lawn in the compound, a costly carpet was spread, on which MA took her seat.

* Rai Bahadur Deven Chatterjee was my contemporary at Sibpur College. He and I lived in the same hostel. I was already familiar with him and acquainted with his wife, Toru Didi.

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We all kept standing around MA. Here, Toru Didi, Rai Bahadur's wife, brought some *sandesh* (delicious Bengali sweet) and other delicacies tastefully arranged on a plate. But when she tried to put a small bit of *sandesh* into MA's mouth, she turned her head and would not open her mouth. Toru Didi made three or four futile attempts to feed MA. But she would not open her mouth. MA's repeated refusal to take in even a small morsel thoroughly upset Toru Didi. She was so much perturbed that drops of perspiration appeared on the fair-complexioned lady's forehead. We too were nervous over MA's persistent refusal to take food. MA, however, surprised us by saying, "Is this how you feed your child ? Just place your hand on the child's head and it will open its mouth." Toru Didi quickly followed the hint. She placed the palm of her left hand on MA's head. This acted like magic. MA immediately opened her mouth and Toru Didi easily performed her feeding duty.

That evening, we had a very long drive by car for over two hours. On the way, the American devotee put to MA a number of questions, for which I acted as interpreter. His first question was,—"Will the movements now con-

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ducted by Mahatma Gandhi do the country any good ?" Without telling MA anything about the question, I said,—"MA never answers political questions like this. If you have any spiritual problems, MA will resolve them." I had the impression that MA did not know English. But from what she told me in a mildly rebuking tone, I realised that MA had thoroughly understood all that passed between the American and myself. MA put to me the question,—"What question did he want you to ask me and what did you tell him ?" I told MA everything. On hearing me, she said, "Why did you give him that sort of reply ? Tell him that whatever Gandhiji is doing, he is following God's will and it will benefit the country." The American's second question was,—"What is MA's message ?" On telling MA about this question, she said,—"Tell him that my message is not the same for all." The American now put his last question, "What message or instructions MA wants to give me ?" MA said, "Tell him to wait and he will know my instructions for him in due time."

On our return from motor-trip, we found that MA's tent was overcrowded. The reason was,—MA was to leave for Berily the next day. After fully enjoying MA's divine company till

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very late hours, we returned home that night at about 2 a.m. (31st March 1937).

Next day (31. 3. 37), we engaged a photographer, who accompanied us with his camera and reached MA's tent at about 8 a.m. Mrs. C had with her some sweets, specially prepared at home, also a full set of dress for MA, including one *dhoti* with fine border (such as MA was wearing in those days), a short coat and a pair of leather half-slippers. MA was seated on a low wooden stool in a back compartment of the tent. When about to change MA's dress, Mrs. C asked me to go outside. At this, MA remarked, "What shame have I before him ? He is verily my father." I kept standing with my back turned towards MA. After the dresses were changed, MA said to Mrs. C, "*Baba* (meaning myself) will have the coat, you take all else." That coat, *dhoti*, etc. have been lying in Mrs. C's careful custody for over thirty-nine years. (They will be transferred to any special museum that may be founded some day in one or other of MA's *ashrams*).

Dressing done, Mrs. C started feeding MA with the sweets she had prepared and brought for her. After she had put two or three morsels into MA's mouth, I felt a strong urge for feeding

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her with my own hand. After securing MA's kind permission, I carefully washed my right hand. Then taking a morsel of sweet in my right hand, as I was about to feed MA, the previous evening's experience flashed in my mind. So, without the least hesitation, I put the palm of my left hand on MA's head. Instantly, MA opened her mouth and I promptly put into her mouth the morsel I had in my right hand. Having fed MA with just a single morsel, my desire for feeding her was fully satisfied. So, I moved aside and told Mrs. C to resume feeding MA.

Feeding over, I placed before MA a serious new problem that confronted both Mrs. C and myself. I said to her,—"*Ma*, since we had your *darshan*, we are unable to meditate on the form of Gopal (child-Krishna), as your form is coming in between and blurring the form of Gopal in our mind. Does it portend any evil for us ?" The reply MA gave was clear and categorical. "Why should any evil befall you ?", said she. "Whoever is coming spontaneously should be allowed to come", she added. After we got this encouraging reply from MA, we became convinced that MA and Gopal were just the same and accepted MA also as our *Ishta* (deity specially chosen for worship and meditation).

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Then, Mrs. C carefully combed and arranged MA's dark, long hair in one large knot on the crown of her head. A garland of full-bloomed marigold flowers was put around the hairy knot. Her forehead and cheeks were decorated with sandal-wood prints just as a child is decorated on its birthday anniversary. Thus, she was made to assume the look of Gopal (child-Krishna) and seated with one of her knees raised after the traditional posture of *Naru Gopal* (child-Krishna in a special posture). Arrangements were now made to take her photograph in that posture. While these arrangements were proceeding, MA, like a veritable child, pointed her finger towards some ladies, who were watching her with keen curiosity from a nearby house and made a mild protest, saying,—"Look, they are all watching me. Do you think, I don't feel shy ?"

A copy of that day's photograph was framed and installed for worship on the altar in our *Puja Ghar* (Room of worship) by the side of the brass image of Gopal that we worshipped before. I pleasantly recall that while the photo was being taken, I told MA that she was leaving us, but we would retain her in the photo. MA replied, "But how little of me will you have in



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the photo ?" After MA's departure, I have so many times kept gazing at the photo, but how little of living, moving, vivacious and bright MA in flesh and blood and her enchanting, serene beauty with ever-abiding sweet smiles and occasional bursts of loud laughter, could I have in the lifeless still photo !

That very night (31. 3. 37), MA was due to leave for Berily. Hundreds of people, men and women, thronged the platform of Delhi Junction station to bow down to her and see her off. I also arrived at the platform, accompanied by Chhabi (my daughter) and her mother. While all others spent only one anna each for a platform ticket, I spent twelve annas and purchased *three* Third Class tickets for Gaziabad, so that we could travel eleven miles in MA's compartment. In those days, MA used to travel by Third Class.

Some devotee had brought on the platform a basketful of oranges. MA started distributing the oranges with her own hands. Only once she said, "Nobody should receive more than one orange." I was astonished to note that when the basket was totally empty, every one present had got an orange. Even two unknown passengers, who occupied seats in MA's compartment, got one orange each.

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The train, by which MA and her party were to leave, was to reach Gaziabad at about 10 p.m. Just ten minutes later, another train was to leave Gaziabad for Delhi Junction. But owing to unusually large crowd on the platform of Delhi Junction station, MA's train was somewhat late in leaving Delhi Junction station. Before the train started, all other devotees of MA bowed down at her feet and got down from her compartment, one by one. Only we three remained in the compartment to accompany her. As the train was late, the other train which was to leave Gaziabad for Delhi Junction (and by which we had planned to return) left Gaziabad, before MA's train reached. As there was no other train available for our return to Delhi, we decided to travel with MA's party up to Aligarh (distant 73 miles from Gaziabad), so that we could remain with MA for at least two hours longer.

In the compartment, MA's simple bedding was spread on a bench and MA lay down on her bed. I squatted on the floor just close to MA. Gurupriya Didi vividly narrated to us many miraculous anecdotes of MA. While in the train, I put to MA just one question. I said, "*Ma*, if during holidays, I go to you and stay with you

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for a few days, will you be displeased ?" MA replied, "*Baba*, your question is queer. You are accosting me as *Ma* and at the same time talking about displeasure on my part." After I got this reassuring reply, I went to her at numerous places and on so many occasions, without ever sending any intimation or seeking or waiting for her permission. But on all occasions (without a single exception), MA warmly welcomed me through her sweet, charming smile and enquired about my health and well-being. I never noticed the faintest trace of indifference or unconcern on her ever-beaming countenance. Through an experience extending over nearly forty years, I am firmly convinced that each one of MA's countless devotees all over India and abroad knows that MA loves him/her too dearly, more than everybody else. This may be apparently absurd, but is, in reality, too true.

When the train reached Aligarh station it was about thirty minutes past midnight. We all got down. MA and her party boarded the train bound for Berily, which was waiting at a nearby platform. When this train just started slowly, MA told Gurupriya Didi to quickly give us one blanket. When Gurupriya Didi hurriedly took out the blanket in which MA's bedding was

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wrapped, and threw it out through an open window and I caught it, the train had speeded up. We heard MA's loud, melodious voice for the last time, crying out to me, "*Baba*, use the blanket for sitting upon."

Carrying the blanket in my hand, we three occupied a bench (with back-rest) on the platform of Aligarh railway station. But we could not, out of our reverence for MA's gift, spread and sit upon the blanket. Instead, we all smelt it and held it on our heads, one by one. During those days, we invariably experienced a soft, but distinctly floral aroma on every limb of MA's—on her hands, feet, back and head, on her garments and bedding, nay even on her leather slippers. On this unique point, we all old devotees of MA were unanimous.

That night, for three long hours (1·00 to 4·00) we three had to wait on a bench at Aligarh station. But as we kept ourselves agreeably engaged in conversing about MA, we were not listless. Then, boarding a train leaving for Delhi Junction, we comfortably reached home at about 7 a.m. It was on Friday, 1st April 1937.

Previous night, after purchasing three tickets for Gaziabad, I had a very small amount left in my pocket. So, it was impossible for me to pay

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three railway fares from Gaziabad to Aligarh and back to Delhi and also fines due for travelling without adequate tickets. But it was also MA's special grace, that nobody demanded tickets, fares or fines from us. We returned home safe and sound after a most delightful and momentous all-night vigil.

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CHAPTER 2

## TWO DAYS AT BERILY

(3rd and 4th April 1937)

MA with her small party left New Delhi on Thursday, 31st March 1937. Leaving Delhi Junction station at about 9.30 p.m., changing the train at Aligarh at about 0-45 hours (on 1.4.37), the party reached Berily on Friday morning. The same day a telegraphic message was sent by Bholanath to Panchu Da (*) (who was Bholanath's disciple) to the effect that the *Keertan* Party of New Delhi should proceed to Berily and hold *keertan* there on Sunday (3rd April). It was also stipulated that Panchu Da's teen-age daughter, a skilled singer and dancer, should accompany the *Keertan* Party. Accordingly, along with a *Keertan* Party of fourteen or fifteen young men and Panchu Da's daughter, myself, my daughter Chhabi and her mother left for Berily on Saturday night. On reaching Berily railway station on Sunday morning, we

* Shri Panchanan Mukherjee of No. 13 Cantonment Road, New Delhi. See p. 1.

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all went to a nearby large *dharamsala* (free rest-house for pilgrims), where MA and her party were putting up. For holding the *keertan*, a beautiful *mancha* (*) was built at the centre of a commodious hall in the *dharamsala*. After all arrangements necessary were made, at mid-day, the New Delhi party started singing their wonted *keertan* : *"Shri Krishna Chaitanya Prabhu Nityananda Hare Krishna Hare Rama Shri Radhe Govinda"*. After about three hours, MA also got a party of local ladies and girls to sing *keertan* in a separate adjoining room of the *dharamsala*.

At about 10 p.m. (Sunday) the New Delhi Party with Panchu Da's daughter took leave of MA and left the *dharmsala*. They boarded train at Berily to return to Delhi on Monday morning. Chhabi, her mother and I—with the hope of enjoying MA's company in a comparatively lonely surrounding—stayed with MA for just

* *Mancha* is a small, temple-like temporary structure of square or hexagonal shape, artistically decorated with green leaves, flowers, garlands and festoons. Framed pictures of Radha-Krishna, Gour, Nitai and other deities and holy personages are hung from all sides of the structure. The *Keertan* Party, while singing *keertan* to the accompaniment of harmonium, *khol* (drum) and cymbals, walk (and sometimes dance) around the *mancha* continuously as the *keertan* goes on—it may be—for 12, 24 or longer hours.

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another day. We planned to stay with MA for the whole of next day and leave Berily on Monday night.

Almost immediately after the departure of the New Delhi party, finding me sitting alone, MA put me to *two* distinct tests. *First*, she said to me, "*Baba*, may I take *MA* (meaning Mrs. C) with me ?" I was never prepared to meet such a strange question. I kept mum. But completely unawares, my eyes became full of tears. On seeing my pitiable condition, MA relieved me saying, "I was only joking ; why shall I take *Ma* (*i.e.*, Mrs. C) with me ?" At this first test, I failed miserably. *Next*, MA put to me the question.—'*Baba*, why did you not leave tonight ?' Somebody told MA that I was running my own college, and as such, I was free to be absent just as I liked. On hearing this, MA said, "If that is your own college, you ought to be extra-cautious in respect of regular attendance. What will your employees think about you ?" I replied,—"*Ma*, whenever any of my employees needs, I allow him leave ungrudgingly and perform his work myself. Don't you think that today, when I need leave, my employees will not perform my work ?" On hearing my reply, MA looked satisfied. With a

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serene smile on her face, she said, "That's all right ; you stay". At this second test, I succeeded. But at the same time I noted that tolerant and conceding as MA appeared to be, she would never like that any of her devotees should be negligent in attending to his worldly duties.

That night, I got my life's first opportunity to lie down and sleep close to MA at a part of the wide verandah of the *dharamsala*, assigned by MA herself. The place I occupied was on that side of MA's bedding, where her head lay. My head was in the direction of MA. I was so close to her that if during her sleep MA inadvertendly extended her arm, I would receive her direct touch. Before I lay down I submitted to MA ; "*Ma*, I feel hesitant to sleep near you, because during sleep I snore too loudly and you will be inconvenienced." Permissive and tolerant as MA is, she said, "Never mind ; you sleep near my body ; I won't be inconvenienced in the least."

Next morning (Monday, 4.4.37), before MA left her bed, a bevy of local ladies (mainly Panjabi and Kashmiri), beautifully attired in various elegant costumes, arrived and assembled at MA's bed-side. They all offered flowers and garlands to MA, bowed to her in deep obeisance and sang

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*keertan* with remarkable vigour. Then, when MA, after washing her face and mouth, and taking a light repast, sat on her bed, those ladies merrily danced and circled around MA and went on singing *keertan*, keeping time by loud and rhythmical clapping of hands. Along with *keertan*, the ladies themselves played on *tabla* (a pair of small drums played with fingers) with worth-while dexterity.

In the meantime, when a beggar arrived, MA ordered me to give him some *laddoos* (*). A big basket, full of *laddoos*, was kept in the room. When I attempted to fill an improvised bag of *sal* leaf with too many *laddoos*, MA cautioned me, saying, "Give him less ; *laddoos* will be required in the evening."

The same day (Monday), an old Bengali gentleman met MA at the *dharamsala*. He told MA that he had two girls in view, out of whom he wanted to choose one as bride for his son. He gave descriptions of both the girls and their parents and wanted MA to say which girl, he should select. Even on repeated entreaties, MA did not give her own opinion. She said, "Whatever is your opinion, the same is mine." She

* *Laddoo* is a spherical ball of sweetmeat, popular all over India.

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repeated this every time the gentleman requested MA to give her opinion. Thus, MA firmly avoided giving her own opinion. After this gentleman took leave of MA, I said to her, "*Ma*, the gentleman requested for your opinion so many times. You certainly knew which of the two girls was more suitable. Why then did you withhold your own opinion ?" MA replied, "*Baba*, you do not know that he did not sincerely seek my opinion. He himself preferred one of the two girls, but other members of his family were against him. He really wanted me to endorse his own wrong choice, so that on the strength of my opinion, he could make all others accept his own choice. He would have ignored my advice and stuck to his own choice. For disregarding my opinion, he would have to suffer graver punishment. In a case like this, why should I give my opinion and thereby expose him to graver evil ?" From this explanation, I had the clear revelation that if an ardent devotee approached MA for her infallible solution of a worldly problem or dilemma, MA was always prepared to help him/her. This important fact is well-known to every devotee of MA, who is reliant on, and has taken refuge in, her.

At mid-day, Mrs. C deputed me to a nearby

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bazar to purchase some fruits for MA. When I returned to the *dharamsala*, with fruits, MA's noon-time *bhoga* (meal) was nearly over. In those days the remnant of MA's meal, which we held as very sacred as *prasad* (grace), was awarded to some devotee present, along with the bowl from which MA was fed. I cherished the hope that I would have the valued *prasad* that day. But to my utter disappointment, I saw that the bowl with *prasad* was already awarded to a local Bengali youth, who was present. When I came and stood near the door, MA had a look at my face. Gurupriya Didi was feeding MA. Most unexpectedly, MA said to her, "Khukni (*), I shall eat more." At MA's bidding, in another large bowl, boiled rice was intimately mixed with milk and mango-juice. Gurupriya Didi started feeding MA from the bowl once more. After taking just two sips of the delicious food-mixture, MA pointed towards me and said, "Give it to him." I felt gratified when my cherished desire for MA's special *prasad* was thus fulfilled in such an inconceivable manner.

The same night, close upon 10 o'clock, we three bowed down to MA and taking her leave

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* *Khukni* (meaning 'little girl') was Gurupriya Didi's pet nickname, by which MA used to accost her in those days.

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proceeded towards Berily railway station. At that hour, a local *keertan* party was performing *keertan* in MA's presence loudly and vigorously.

The Delhi-bound train, due to leave Berily at 10 p.m., was waiting at the station. We purchased tickets and occupied seats in a third class compartment in the train. Besides us, there were only two Muslim passengers in the compartment. So each of us comfortably stretched on a bench. The train, however, did not start before midnight. On enquiry, we learnt that there had been a breach somewhere in the railway line, which delayed the starting of the train. Some time after mid-night I fell asleep.

When I awoke, I found that the train was running very fast. I sat up and began to think about MA in an absorbing meditative mood. During this reflection and while wide awake, I had a rather strange experience. I distinctly heard some persons singing in chorus the following two lines of *keertan* in an enchantingly melodious tune : *"Nitai Gour Radhey Shyam/ Hare Krishna Hare Ram."* This particular *keertan* I had never sung myself nor heard any body or any party singing. After a short while, the music grew fainter and fainter and became totally inaudible. I was now extremely asto-

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nished and wondered wherefrom the mysterious music could have come. Almost bewildered, I woke up both Chhabi and her mother and enquired if they were singing the *keertan*. They were surprised at my querry. I was on the point of waking up the two Muslim co-passengers. But suddenly it struck me that the particular *keertan* I heard, could not have been sung by them. Having failed to unravel the mystery of the *keertan*, I sat quietly and thinking deeply, concluded as follows. Perhaps, some party was at that hour singing that particular *keertan* at a distant place, and their music somehow reached my inner ears, for a while, through MA's intangible grace.

* * * *

On Tuesday, 5th April (1937), we three reurned to our residence in New Delhi before 7 a.m.

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CHAPTER 3

## FOUR DAYS IN CALCUTTA

(6th to 9th May 1937)

Early morning on 6th May 1937, MÀ and her party came down to Calcutta from Jamshedpur. Luckily, I had come to Calcutta close upon that day on some private business. MA stayed this time at the small (but none-the-less most beautiful) Birla's Temple, close to the Race Course at Ballygunge. Shiva Linga is installed at this Temple. Besides a small, neatly-built, marble-paved *Nat Mandir* (audience hall), there is, in this Temple, a rest-room with a wide open verandah. At the remote end of the *Nat Mandir* there is an artistically carved life-like marble image of a bull, which every visitor to the Temple finds as remarkably attractive.

During those days, MA's birthday ceremony was being observed in the upper-storey hall in Jatish Da's (p. 10) house on Park Side Road (Ballygunge), as also in a pandal erected on a nearby open plot. In the hall were installed two elegantly-framed life-size coloured portraits of

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MA. The portraits were lavishly decorated daily with fresh garlands of lotus and other flowers. As this hall was outside the living quarters in the house, MA (who would not normally enter a house-holder's house) used to enter this hall and attend the functions held in connection with the ceremony. In the morning and afternoon, when the crowd was thin, all functions were held in the hall. After dark, when the crowd was large, the functions were held in the pandal. Renowned *keertan*-specialists like Brojendra Ganguli, Dinesh Thakur and Nibaran Samajpati entertained MA and the audience with *keertan*-songs at these sittings in the pandal.

In the morning, MA would attend the recitation of *stotra* (hymns in praise of God) and *nam-keertan* (singing various God's names) in the hall at Jatish Da's place. Later, she would sit in the *Nat Mandir* at Birla's Temple. Here, MA would discuss various topics with gentlemen and ladies assembled and answer questions put to her.

One evening, Dilip Kumar Roy sang two songs in the pandal. When departing, he promised to go to Birla Temple some day and entertain MA with songs. When Jatish Da was with MA in New Delhi (p. 10), he received a lengthy letter



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from Calcutta in which it was stated that Dilip Babu had come to Calcutta from Pondichery to have MA's *darshan*. Jatish Da showed this letter to me. In this letter, it was stated that on two occasions, MA's photo was shown to Shri Aurobindo and his opinion on MA was sought. At first, he wrote (*) : "Mother Anandamayee of Dacca is the embodiment of beauty, purity and chastity." The next time, he wrote : "Mother Anandamayee remains in the state of *sat-chit-ananda* (Truth-Knowledge-Bliss)." After learning about the above two opinions of Shri Aurobindo, Dilip Babu had a strong desire for having MA's *darshan*. He saw MA for the first time at Howrah railway station on 3rd May (1937), when MA came from Varanasi to Howrah and then went to Jamshedpur.

Every night, after the functions in the pandal were over, select, intimate devotees of MA, particularly married ladies and grown-up *kumaris* (unmarried girls) would assemble around MA in the upper-storey hall. Here they would dress MA as Krishna, sing *keertan* and enjoy themselves by entertaining MA and demonstrating in

* Shri Aurobindo was not usually talking directly to his disciples, who were all inmates in his *Ashram* at Pondichery. The disciples had to put to him questions in writing, to which he would give replies in writing.

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various ways their intense love for, and devotion to, MA.

While attending the functions, I made acquaintance with a good number of MA's old and new devotees. Among them were Sachi Da (Assistant Income-tax Commissioner), Atal Da * (Professor at Rajsahi Government College), Naresh Chakravarti (Professor, Calcutta University) and Nagen De (famous sweetmeat-maker). I also got acquainted with a Parsi youth, named Kharas, who subsequently became Swami Keshavananda.

One morning, Dilip Roy came to Birla Temple and entertained MA (and the small select gathering around her) with two songs (each of which took him over 45 minutes to finish), sung with enchanting melody, superb skill and great depth of feeling. Singing done, Dilip Babu put three questions to MA. His first question was

* Atal Da's child-like nature and deep devotion are noteworthy. As a veritable little child of MA, he had no hesitation in accepting motherly service from MA. About his remarkable devotion MA thus reported. One hot summer day, while MA and Bhaiji were coming from Mussorie to Dehra Dun on foot, they felt very thirsty. MA clearly saw (through subtle vision) that at Rajsahi (distant 1200 miles from Dehra Dun) Atal was offering to MA's picture-image nicely-cut small pieces of water-melon. On seeing this, MA's thirst was instantly quenched. This showed Atal Da's deep devotion and MA's divine nature.

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worded thus : "*Ma*, my *Gurudev* (*i.e.*, Shri Aurobindo) says that without some help from a *Guru* (Spiritual Teacher), it is well-nigh impossible to achieve success in the spiritual path. But my friends say that one man can never be a *Guru* of another man. Which of these two opinions is correct ?" MA replied, "*Baba*, both the opinions are correct." Dilip Babu looked confused at MA's reply. Then MA clarified her reply, saying, "*Baba*, what your *Gurudev* stated according to his own knowledge and experience is correct for him, and what your friends say according to their knowledge and intelligence is true for them. All these are relative truths ; so they do not agree with one another. Dilip Babu then presented his second question as follows : "*Ma*, the other day, at Howrah station, you told me that you had seen me in my songs. I failed to understand what you exactly meant." MA replied, "All sounds have but one common source ; hence a sound produced anywhere can be heard at a distance." Dilip Babu then put his last question : "When again shall I have an opportunity to entertain you with songs ? MA affectionately replied, "*Baba*, you may sing anywhere ; I shall sit on your lap as a child and enjoy your music." This particular assurance of MA that

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if a devotee sings feelingly to her, verily like a child she sits on his lap and listens to his music, made such a deep impression on my mind that on my return to New Delhi, with the ambition of being a singer, I secretly tried hard for several days to practise playing on my daughter's harmonium. But to my utter dismay, I found that it was not merely difficult, but well-high impossible for a forty-three-year-old person to learn the A-B-C of music and become a musician nearly as proficient as Dilip Roy.

During these days, many other renowned gentlemen and ladies came to Birla Temple to have MA's *darshan*. Among them were Doctor Mahendra Sarcar (celebrated philosopher and disciple of Shri Aurobindo), Basanti Devi (widow of Late C. R. Das) and her daughter Aparna Devi.

One day, Dr. Mahendra Sarcar put to MA the following question : "*Ma*, after a person has *darshan* of *Virat* (*i.e.*, realisation of Supreme God), does the human body survive ?" MA said, "An ordinary mortal's body does not survive. But the case here (*i.e.*, MA's own case) is different. Here, the play of *Virat* (Supreme God) and normal behaviour (like walking, talking and performing work) are going on simultaneously.

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Dr. Sarcar's next question was, "Which of the two, *nada* * or *vindu* * does a *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) experience first ?" MA replied, "According to *sanskara* (inclination or fitness acquired in previous births), some may experience *nada* and others may experience *vindu* first."

Dr. Sarcar's last question was, "Ma, have you studied Philosophy ?" MA asked in reply, "Why do you ask this question ?" Dr. Sarcar explained that whatever answers MA gave to his and others' questions, always agreed with what is given in books on Philosophy. "How does it happen ?" he asked. After about a minute's pause, MA slowly and gravely replied, "There is one *virat* (voluminous) book in which full knowledge of all subjects—Science, Philosophy, etc. is included. Nothing can remain unknown to a person who has discovered this *Virat* (voluminous) Book of Knowledge. It seemed that MA hinted that he who acquires *brahmajnana* (knowledge of all-pervasive Supreme God) is a perfect

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* *Nada* means 'sound'. In spiritual vocabulary, *nada* is the specific cosmic sound (known as 'Om' or '*pranaba*'), which a spiritual seeker often experiences (*i.e.*, hears with his inner ears). *Vindu* means a point. In spiritual language, *vindu* signifies the spot of light that a spiritual seeker experiences (*i.e.*, sees with his subtle inner eyes). The experiences of *nada* and *vindu* come naturally through deep and prolonged meditation.

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master of all subjects including Science, Philosophy, etc.

One day, just after mid-night, in the upper hall in Jatish Da's house, his younger daughter Booni (*) dressed MA as Krishna, adorning her with garlands and various ornaments made with flowers, also with a crown of flowers, bedecked with peacock feathers, the traditional head-dress of Krishna. That night, MA ordered all her sons (*i.e.*, male devotees) to leave the hall. There, for a long while, she, in the exclusive company of ladies and girls, had *keertan* and performed other *leelas* (sports), unknown to us, her sons. When we re-entered the hall, at MA's instance, I noticed that she had also a flute in her hand. It seemed to me that MA was, in a remarkable degree, influnced by the spirit of Krishna himself. So, I considered myself blessed by the *darshan*

* *Booni's* formal name was 'Juthica' (Jasmine). As she was always bearing a smiling face, MA gave her the name '*Phulla Juthica*', *i.e.*, 'Full-bloomed Jasmine'. Unmarried, she left her parents and lived in MA's *ashrams* for many years. She loved MA very dearly and looked upon her as Guru, Ishta (Deity chosen for worship), every thing. She used to serve MA with scrupulous care and deep devotion. She breathed her last early in November, 1964. at Brindaban Ashram, when MA was present there. Just a week before her death, I had a talk with her. She felt very sorry, because due to ill-health, she was unable to serve MA as actively as she would like to serve her.

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of veritable live Krishna moving gracefully. At that momentous hour, I remembered Mrs. C. Addressing her mentally, I said, "Unlucky as you are, you have missed the rare *darshan* of MA as Krishna, as I am having."

Later, after MA recovered to a great extent her normal human mood, MA stood still near the centre of the hall. Then, one by one, all the devotees present, started bowing down to her, verily looking upon her as Krishna himself. When my turn came,—I was still somewhat overwhelmed—I kneeled down before MA and made the following submission : "*Ma*, tonight I shall bow down to you under *two* special conditions." "What are your conditions ?" enquired MA. I replied, "*Firstly*, when any one bows down to you, you join both hands and offer him *namaskar*. Tonight, you must not do that. *Secondly*, after any body bows down to you, you look at the person with a side-glance. Tonight after I bow down to you, you must look straight into my face." Benign MA at once agreed. Having secured MA's assurance, I bent down and placing my head on MA's both feet, I heartily bowed down to her. I noticed that MA did not join her hands and thus fulfilled my first condition. Then, accord-

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ing to the second condition, I expected MA to look straight at me. But full of fun, as MA is, she did not fulfil the other condition at all easily. When I looked at her expectantly, she turned her head and looked in another direction. When I tried to catch her glance in this new direction, she turned and looked in the opposite direction. In this manner she dodged me three or four times, and stalled casting a direct look at me and fulfilling the second condition. At last, when my yearning for her direct look grew very strong, MA did fulfil the second condition by looking directly on my face. As she looked on, I felt that through her enchanting gaze, MA, in a subtle form, entered and permeated my entire being. I lamentably lack the language in which I can adequately express the divine bliss I experienced as MA kept looking steadfastly into my eyes in that strange, weird manner. Later, so many times over, I was keenly desirous of receiving that covetable look from MA. But receiving it did not rest at all on my will. It depended solely on MA's divine grace.

That night, we (myself and my younger brother Biren) came to Birla Temple with the purpose of passing the rest of the night, sleeping

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in MA's purifying proximity. It was already 3 a. m. when we arrived. I saw MA pointing out places to individual devotees, where they should sleep. MA's bedding was spread in the centre of *Nat Mandir*. Ladies were directed to occupy places on one side and male devotees were put on the other side. "*Ma*, you have not assigned any place for me", I endearingly complained. MA enquired where I had slept in the previous night. "In the previous night, I slept in the open, outside the *Nat Mandir*", I said. On hearing this, MA at once pointed out a place for me. In trying to lie down in the place, assigned to me, I was in a fix. I lay down with my head in the direction of MA and Bholanath. But then my legs stretched in the direction of the image of Shiva, the presiding Deity in the temple. This was plainly objectionable. It was nearly dark. With some effort, I noticed that MA was lying with her back turned towards me. So I felt sure that MA could not see that my legs stretched towards the Deity. But I realised my mistake, when MA (with her back still turned towards me) remonstrated, saying, "Don't stretch your legs towards my *Thakur* (Deity)." For a while, I did not respond. But when MA

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repeated the same order ('Don't stretch your legs towards my Deity') three times, I could not help giving the evasive reply, "My head is in the direction of my *Thakur* (meaning MA herself)". But MA simply ignored my reply and again repeated the same order three times more. Now, I replied, "If you recognise my *Thakur* (meaning MA herself), I shall recognise your *Thakur*. After a brief pause, MA said, "All right, I recognise your *Thakur*." At once, I replied, "I too recognise your *Thakur* ; I shall stretch my legs diagonally." MA said, "That's all right." Through this unexpected short *leela* (sport), MA firmly endorsed my action in accepting MA herself as my *Ishta* (form of God, chosen for worship and meditation) in place of Gopal, my former *Ishta*. Thus, whatever hesitation I had in accepting MA as my sole *Ishta*, was totally overcome by this unexpected *leela* of MA.

Next day (10th May) 1937, when in the morning I returned to my temporary residence at Sealdah (Calcutta), I felt quite tired and too sleepy. I could hardly open my eyes. I was unable to walk or even keep standing, I was so much overpowered by drowsiness. In this context, I recalled Bhaiji's relevant remark, "To keep

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MA's company, one must be *gudakesha* (conqueror of sleep)." The same afternoon, MA was due to board train at Sealdah station and proceed towards Faridpur (now in Bangladesh). I first slept soundly for over three hours. Then, after taking meal, I arrived at Sealdah railway station close upon 2 p. m. MA's party on this journey included Bholanath, Bhaiji, Swami Akhandananda and Gurupriya Didi. Among the many devotees who came to the railway station to see off MA and her party, I particularly noticed Shri Abani Sharma (a very old devotee of Berhampur) and one respectably-dressed Muslim youth, who appeared to be a wealthy Bombaywalla merchant. I travelled a short distance in the compartment, occupied by MA and her party. I got down at Barasat railway station. Here, as required by Gurupriya Didi, I hurriedly got a small brass pitcher filled with drinking water. When I handed over the pitcher to Didi, the train carrying MA and her party had already started moving forward. Leisurely, and with a heavy heart and in a pensive mood, I took a train to return to Sealdah.

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## CHAPTER 4

## SEVEN DAYS AT BERILY-NAINITAL-ALMORA

### (6th to 12th June 1937)

On enquiry by telegram, we learnt in New Delhi from Jatish Da at Calcutta that *en route* Kailash, MA and her party would reach Berily on 5th June (1937). For a few days prior to this date, we (Mrs. C and I) were seriously deliberating whether or not we should proceed to Berily to accompany MA and her party from Berily to Almora and see them off to Kailash. The burden of domestic duty was our chief obstacle. On receipt of the telegraphic message, we became extremely eager to leave for Berily. On 5th June, before we left, we both bowed down before MA's framed photograph, installed in our Puja Room and prayed to MA as follows : "*Ma*, we are exceedingly eager to have your physical *darshan*. We are unable to stay at home. We are proceeding to Berily. You are here. You kindly look after our children during our absence." After praying in those terms, both of us started for Berily with light heart.

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We reached Berily next morning, 6th June (1937).

That night, we all slept with MA on an open terrace in the *dharamsala* at Berily. The night was hellishly too warm and sultry. There was no breeze at all. A palm-leaf hand-fan had to be waved for the whole night to keep MA fairly comfortable. At first, Gurupriya Didi was waving the fan. But as she felt sleepy and drowsed, she started hitting MA with the fan. Seeing this, I myself took the fan from Didi and started waving it to give some breeze to MA. But I was soon ashamed to find that, overcome with drowsiness, I too hit MA with the fan. At last, I made over the fan to Mrs. C, who could keep awake more easily. I felt sure that in providing MA with breeze, she would not hit MA with the fan as both Didi and I did.

On 7th June, we spent the whole day in the *dharamsala* at Berily. Before noon, Mrs. C and I were initiated by Bholonath who gave us *mantra* in MA's presence. Before initiating us, Bholanath performed Puja. All the while, MA lay down on a carpet in front of us, completely covering herself. We had the feeling that Bholanath worshipped MA and initiated us

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entirely under MA's guidance. In the evening, we all went with MA to the bazar at Berily and entered a shoe-store to purchase a pair of leather slippers for MA. A pair of slippers just fitting MA's feet was selected too. MA told the Muslim shop-keeper that it would be good for him to present the pair of slippers to her and not charge any price. But the shop-keeper declined. The pair of slippers was secured by paying full price. While returning to *dharamsala*, MA told us that if the shop-keeper did not charge any price he would have been benefited; but he declined as he was unlucky.*

The same night (7th June), at midnight, we all left Berily by train and reached Katgodam in the morning on Tuesday (8.6.37). Manik Ghosh of Lucknow and Mrs. Yashpal (†) of Berily and several others had joined our party. From Katgodam, the whole party of 20 or 22 persons (Bengalees, U. P. people, Panjabis and Kashmiris)—men, women, girls and boys —went by bus to one end of Talli Talao, the

*Later, it was learnt that this unlucky shop-keeper died within one month from this date.

†Mrs. Yashpal, wife of a high Government official at Berily, had very deep love and strong attraction for MA, who gave her the name *Maha Ratan* (Great Jewel).

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renowned, very deep lake at Nainital. The lake was one mile long and a half mile wide. We were to cross the lake lengthwise in tiny boats. There was but one boatman in each boat. MA with Mrs. C, Gurupriya Didi and another lady was in one boat, which was about 30 ft. ahead of the boat in which Toonoo (Jatish Da's brother-in-law) and I were going in the company of Bholanath. Both Toonoo and I were disciples of Bholanath. We had a fancy that we would try and put Bholanath's boat ahead of MA's boat. Toonoo and I got two small improvised oars and helped our boatman as best as we could. But even after ten minutes' hard struggle, we failed to reduce the distance between MA's boat and Bholanath's even by one single inch. With a smile on her face, MA was watching our futile efforts with evident delight. When we gave up the struggle in abject disappointment, MA and other ladies in her boat had a hearty laugh. After crossing the lake, we all went to the *dharamsala*, attached to Nayna Devi Temple, situated at the other end of the lake. Here, MA and we, who accompanied her, occupied some rooms.

The same evening, in a room in the *dharamsala* at Nainital, MA put me on a minor trial.

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She ordered me to arrange in a medium-size steel trunk a heap of articles including clothings and sundry odd articles. Several times, I attempted to put all the articles in the trunk, trying to arrange them in different ways. But every time I found that the space in the trunk was evidently inadequate for all the articles. At last, I started to make arithmetical calculations. First, I guessed the dimensions of the trunk and calculated its approximate capacity. Next, I found by guessing the volumes of all the articles, one by one. I found that the total volume of all the articles definitely exceeded the capacity of the trunk. When I felt sure, I emphatically declared that it was impossible to accommodate so many articles in that small trunk. MA said, "Let me try." Saying this, she set to work. Without the least thought or hesitancy, she quickly arranged the whole heap of articles with unerring skill. I was surprised to find that all the articles were easily put in the trunk, quite neatly arranged. The lid of the trunk too could be closed without difficulty. And all this was accomplished at the very first attempt. This incident gave my pride of education and intelligence a rude jolt.

The next day (8th June 1937) in the afternoon, when the sun was still glittering at



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tree-tops, MA suddenly said, "Let us all go out and have a stroll along the road on the bank of the lake. Ladies in our party, who were preparing the night meal, mildly objected, But MA did not spare them. She firmly ordered, "Put down the fire in the oven and come out,—the cooking will be done by itself." The whole party came out with MA and proceeded along the tarred road on the bank of the lake. There were lofty trees alongside the road and at intervals there were wooden benches with back-rest. After going a long distance, MA said, "Let us return now." On proceeding a few paces towards the *dharamsala*, where we were staying, MA sat on a bench and rested for a while. From MA's somewhat restless movement and cxpectant look, it was plain that she was looking for something. Some of the ladies in the party sat on the bench with MA. The rest of us were standing around MA. All of a sudden, MA stood up and said again, "Let us get back now." When we had proceeded a few paces towards the *dharamsala*, a little sparrow fell down from an adjacent tree near MA's feet and was waving its wings restlessly. A Kashmiri teen-age boy was standing close to MA. She ordered the boy to

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lift up the sparrow from the ground. The boy lifted the bird and placing it on the palm of his hand, held it close to MA's eyes. I was standing quite near. As the incident appeared te be somewhat strange, I was closely observing MA and the sparrow. I clearly saw that the bird with its tiny eyes was looking at MA's face and MA was looking at it with evident affection. The wings of the sparrow were shaking. Gradually, the motion of the shaking wings slowed down and the bird became still. Its eyes also closed. It was clear that the bird was dead. MA now ordered the Kashmiri boy to throw away the dead bird. The boy obeyed MA by carefully laying the dead body of the bird on the brink of the lake.

The same night, after meal, we were sitting on our respective beds, spread around MA's bed, on which she sat. We enquired of MA about the sparrow that died in MA's presence, after it gazed at MA and MA gazed at it. MA gave the curt reply, "It was longing for *darshan*". In that brief reply, I got the solution of a difficult problem of mine. As previously advised by MA, I was at this time, mentally putting to MA the following question : "*Ma*, self-satisfied as you are, there is nothing that

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you want to know, hear, see, learn or acquire. Why then do you, at so great pains, travel in train by Third Class and go about everywhere?" This brief reply of MA explained to me that our Anandamayee MA, calm and contented as she always is, moves about so restlessly and everywhere only to give *darshan* and thereby release hundreds of her devotees from cycles of birth and death—wherever they are and whatever their form—man, animal, bird or tree—who have been longing eagerly for the liberating *darshan*.

After this, MA frankly expressed her warm appreciation of our love for her. She said, "Those among you, who, although affluent, undergo the hardship of travelling with this body by Third Class and pass their days in *dharamsalas* and temples, in spite of serious inconveniences, do so only because you love this body." On hearing from her the fact that we love her very dearly, we were much elated. In this context, I pleasantly recall that at Nainital, Bhaiji, in complimenting Mrs. C and myself, observed, "I had devotion to, and reliance on, MA only after I had tested her on many occasions. That you have got such intense love for, and faith in, MA in such a short period shows MA's abundant *kripa* (grace) for you."

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The next day (Wednesday, 9. 6. 37), at about 12 noon, we all left the *dharamsala* and attempted to cross the lake in a number of small boats and reach the bus-stand at Nainital. As a strong wind blew just after we started, high waves, resembling waves on a rough sea, appeared on the blue surface of the extremely deep lake. As it became rather risky to go by boats, we had the boats led to the bank in the middle of the journey. We got out of the boats and covered the rest of the way on foot and arrived at the bus-stand. Here, we all boarded an Almora-bound bus. It was dusk when our bus reached Ranikhet. In this hilly area, bus-traffic after dark was not permitted. So, we had to spend the night at Ranikhet. Gentlemen of the locality (among whom there were persons, who were well-acquainted with some devotees of MA travelling in our party) made perfect arrangements for our stay in a school building and also for our night meals. It became plain that if MA was in a travelling party, it had no problem in respect of safety, lodging or boarding and the journey was bound to be smooth and comfortable. Next morning (Thursday, 10. 6. 37), at about 7 a. m., after we had our breakfast with warm, sweetened milk, we again boarded

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the bus and proceeded towards Almora. On our way, at Ranikhet bazar, we met Dashu Da of Varanasi. He had visited Kedar, Badri and other holy places and was returning to Varanasi. On hearing that MA was on way to Kailash with a party, he expressed his desire for accompanying the party. Dashu Da was a sturdy, strong and active youth and was already familiar with most members of MA's party, Hence, his joining the party was welcomed by all.

On this momentous day, while travelling by bus, through MA's grace, I had a strange, short-time divine *darshan* or experience. In the bus, MA and other ladies in the party occupied two or three front benches, We males were at the back. Sitting on the floor of the bus, Hari Ram Joshi,* Manik, Dashu Da, Toonoo and myself were loudly and feelingly singing *keertan*, our wordings being '*Ma-Ma-Ma-Ma*'. When the music rose to a high pitch, tears were flowing freely from my eyes. I was imagining that MA, in

* Hari Ram Joshi was a high official under U. P. State Government. He belonged to Almora District. He came into close contact with MA and Bhaiji when during 1932—35, they were living in seclusion in a dilapidated *dharamsala* attached to a temple at Raipur (near Dehra Dun). He had great reverence and devotion for MA and Bhaiji. He wrote a book, MA ANANDAMAYI LILA, in English. He expired a few years ago.

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the form of a small child, was sitting on my right lap and listening to the music—according to the assurance she gave to Dilip Roy at Calcutta (p. 36-37). Suddenly, to my great surprise, I saw that MA's child-form was changed. I vividly saw that a blue child-Krishna stood with his two little feet placed on my right lap. Placing his little arms affectionately round my neck, he seemed to say to me, "Don't weep." At this strange sight, I became overwhelmed and started sobbing audibly like a child. In a short while, this strange scene vanished in thin air. This momentary *darshan* further confirmed my earlier belief that MA and Krishna were identical.

Arriving at Almora at about 11 a. m., along with MA, we all took shelter in the famous Nanda Devi Temple. We stayed in MA's holy company in the commodious precints of this Temple for three days. I am unable to pen down the exquisitely sweet joy that I derive even today by ruminating on the cherished memory of incidents that happened during those three unforgetable days of my pretty long, rather eventful life.

Every night, after meal, each one of us would sit on his (her) bed, spread at the space

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assigned by MA and witness some new *leela* (sport) of MA and take part in it as willed by MA.

On Friday (11. 6. 37) night, an unexpected, noteworthy incident happened. MA's bedding used to be spread on one side of a slightly higher platform right in front of the temple-proper. Bholanath's bedding was on the other side. In between, other ladies of the party spread their beddings. Just next to MA's bed, in the direction of her feet a little space was kept specially reserved for Bhaiji. At a slightly lower level, we, MA's other sons, used to spread our beddings on the floor of a wide verandah. This floor was earthen. The higher platform on which MA, Bhaiji, Bholanath and other ladies slept was fairly level. But there were hollows in the floor of the verandah where we slept. As a result, none of us could have the bed flat or level. That night, when we all were sitting on our respective beds, Gurupriya Didi handed over to MA, the new cap, made from warm cloth, which MA would use on the journey to Kailash. The cap was found to fit MA's head rather tightly. On seeing this, Bholanath (who was observing silence) made signs to say, "Give me the cap ; if I wear it, it will expand and fit MA's

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head comfortably". At this, MA twitched her face like a little child and endearingly said, "You do not use soap ; your hair has a foul smell ; you should not put on the cap." There were two long *jatas* (matted hair) on Bholanath's head. He was also a *sannyasi.* As such, there was no question of his using soap. A little careful thinking would make it clear that what MA said was by way of pure, innocent joke. But on hearing MA, totally child-like as he was, Bholanath immediately burst in anger. From whatever he said loudly and half-openly (observing his vow of silence only partially), it could be gathered that he was bitterly aggrieved and felt grossly insulted by what MA had said. Gradually, he raised the pitch of his voice louder and louder and expressed his deep resentment in various ways. Extremely surprised and bewildered, we all were sitting silently on our respective beds. Suddenly, MA left her bed and approached Bholanath with lightning speed. She stood in front of Bholanath, bent down, held the forefinger of her right hand before his face and in a clear, firm, suppressed voice, said, "The more I ignore your actions, the more unruly you are becoming.—*Choop*! *Choop*! *Choop* !"* Acting

* *Choop* = Silence,—a firm order to keep quiet.

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up to this firm order of MA, Bholanath sat still like a helpless doll. Immediately, MA rushed outside the Temple through an open door. At this time, MA's movements were so speedy that it seemed that she was off the ground and moved in space. After a short while, MA re-entered the Temple through another door and returning to her bed, sat upon it. At that critical hour, while watching angry, lightning-speeded MA, I remembered the sea, as I saw at Puri (Orissa). When high waves rise and fall on the surface of the sea—I experienced it by dipping in the sea—the sea remains still and calm underneath. In the case of MA too, I noticed that although there were furious wrath and impetuous speed of a hurricane in her external appearance, it was clearly evident that in her inner being, unperturbed peace and divine bliss remained unaffected.

Although through MA's stern disciplinary action, Bholanath became bewildered and silent for the time being, after a while, his anger grew double-fold. He left his bed and speedily went outside the Temple. While going out, he loudly declared that he would not accompany MA to Kailash. However, we (myself, Manik, Nagen and Toonoo) immediately went outside the

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Temple and intercepted Bholanath at Almora bazar. We fell at his feet, placed our arms round his waist and implored him to return to the Temple. His violent, seemingly-uncontrollable temper easily cooled down. Like a repentant good boy, he returned and quietly lay down on his bed. Seeing him now, who could remotely guess that only twenty minutes ago, this modest and quiet *sannyasi* had been the living image of furious *Durvasa Muni* (†). Having failed to appreciate an innocent joke of mirthful MA and suddenly flaring up and then becoming calm and collected in the next moment —through these two symptoms one can realise the uniqueness of Bholanath's high character and child-like nature, purified through sustained and intensive penance.

After Bholanath lay down on his bed like an ideally good child, Mrs. C tried to put to sleep this our common *Gurudev*, softly massaging his head and feet and tenderly rubbing his head and body. After a while, thinking that Bholanath had been asleep, Mrs. C returned and sat on her own bed. Now, MA put to Mrs. C the question : "Is Bholanath asleep ?" Mrs. C

† A sage of ancient India, noted for his fury and ominous curses inflicted on slightest provocation.

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replied, "Yes, *Baba* is asleep." MA said, "No, Bholanath in not asleep." She further added, "What will you give me, if Bholanath is not asleep ?" Mrs. C replied, "If Bholanath is not asleep, I shall give you one silken *sari*." Mrs. C had brought this *sari* with crimson borders with the object of dressing MA in the *sari* and sending her off on the journey to Kailash. But full of fun as MA has always been, she wanted to win the *sari* through a wager. Talking on behalf of Mrs. C, I said, "*Ma*, you have not mentioned what you will give, if you lose". Victorious in all fields, second to none and unsurpassed as MA was, she firmly replied, "The question of my losing does not arise". After this, Mrs. C went near Bholanath and called him in a low voice. Bholanath at once opened his eyes. So, it was evident that he was not asleep. Thus MA won the wager and the *sari*.

Next day (Saturday, 12.6.37), after 10 a. m., Mrs. C smeared MA's hair with scented oil, carefully combed it, made it into two braids, which she put around MA's forehead and said to her, "You must not undo the braids. When you will return from Kailash, I shall come up to Almora and undo them". Then, she dressed MA in the

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silken *sari* with bright crimson borders (which MA had won as a wager), overcoat and other warm garments. Some photos (*) of MA, thus attired, were now taken with the camera, I had in my hand.

Photographing over, MA quite unexpectedly indulged in such a *leela* (sport) as proved that she was always eager to fulfil her devotees' cherished desires. Once, Mrs. C had submitted the following prayer to MA : "*Ma*, when you were a house-wife, I never saw you. I have an intense desire to see how you look in the full attire of a house-wife". As MA, still dressed in silken *sari*, was returning to the Temple, she accosted Mrs. C thus : "*Ma*, you wanted to see how I looked as a house-wife. Come with me and see". So saying, MA led her into the Temple. Mrs. C also asked me to follow her. Two or three more persons (Gurupriya Didi and Bhaiji, so far as I can recollect, were among them) accompanied us. Stopping at a secluded corner of the Temple, MA covered her head and entire face (up to throat), with the end of the *sari* as a

* None of these photos was successful. I had the impression that MA cannot be photographed except through her *kripa* (grace). She can, at will, keep herself either within or without any camera's limited range.

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veil, and perfectly played the role of a typically shy, conservative, Bengali village house-wife, dramatising her natural behaviour in diverse situations. Among various poses, she showed how the house-wife looked with just one eye, from under the veil, when she had to serve food to her husband's elder brother—the most remote and respectable of her superiors. Those, who had the good luck of witnessing that *leela* of MA, were highly delighted and gratified.

The same evening, after dark, various preparations in connection with the journey to Kailash were going on. MA herself was engaged in filling small boxes with almond, *pista* and *kismis* (dried grapes) for use of each member of the party that was to accompany her on the journey. While handing over to him the tiny box, meant for Bhaiji, she sportingly said, "Don't eat now". Bhaiji always considered himself as MA's little child. Like a veritable naughty boy, with a wicked smile on his face, Bhaiji started consuming the dry fruits in his box, one by one. All of us present there burst into laughter to witness this perfect play of Bhaiji in the role of a wayward child. MA also joined us, her hilarious devotees.

On Sunday (13.6.37), just when the party was

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about to start, I made another futile attempt to take MA's photo. But this time a small screw of my camera fell on the ground and got lost in dust. When I was busy searching for the lost screw, somebody told me that MA had started and was calling me. Running hurriedly outside the Temple-compound, I found that the whole party had already started. Seated in a *dandi*, which was down on the ground, MA alone was waiting for me. Nearing her, and placing my head squarely on MA's both feet, I bowed down to her. On raising my head and looking at her, I found MA casting her sweet, blissful look straight on my face. In this look, I once more experienced a trace of the indescribable, unalloyed joy that I had when she first blessed me with this sort of direct look at Calcutta (p. 41). It is my firm conviction that each one of MA's intimate devotees must have been blessed with the experience of this blissful, divine and serene look of MA on one or more occasions.

After this, carried in the *dandi*, MA followed other members of her party, who had started ahead of her and disappeared from view, as the *dandi* took a turn on the hill-road. Besides us, who had come from outside to see off MA, a large crowd of local men and women had

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assembled outside the Temple to watch MA starting on her hazardous journey to Kailash. All shed tears freely as they felt bitterly the pangs of separation from MA, whom all loved so passionately. Quite a few of them could not help sobbing audibly like children.

The same day, leaving Almora by bus and boarding train at Katgodam, we returned to our residence in New Delhi on Monday (14.6.37) morning. We were delighted to find that our children were happy, well and contented just as we had left them. Now, entering our Puja Room, we bowed down before MA's framed photograph and image of Gopal and expressed our deep thankfulness.

Then, with a curious mingled feeling of joy and pain,—joy in the remembrance of ever-joyous MA and pain due to separation from her,—we resumed the performance of our respective mundane duties, in all seriousness.

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CHAPTER 5

## MA IN THE ROLE OF SAVIOUR

After mutual exchange of experiences with many of MA's devotees and reading various published anecdotes regarding MA, I have been firmly convinced that everyone of her numerous devotees—specially every long-time devotee—has through MA's abundant grace, overcome all difficulties and received adequate help and succour in all critical situations,—including serious accidents, illnesses, bereavements and dire adversity. If all such accounts are collected and published, they will make a book as voluminous as the *Mahabharata*. In this Chapter, I shall narrate only a few of those incidents, in which I was personally involved, or which I myself witnessed.

I had MA's first *darshan* in New Delhi in March 1937. In July 1938, I was elected Honorary Secretary of Calcutta Engineering College at Ballygunge (Calcutta). My fifth brother, Sunil, had founded the College in 1930. At first, he was Superintendent and Secretary to



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the Governing Body of the College. Under him, Shri J. B. Roy worked as Principal. Later, embarrassed by factions among the members of the Governing Body and the teaching staff, Sunil took a long-term leave and Principal Roy became Secretary. On the very first day, when I came to the office of the College to take over Secretary's charge, some rowdy students obstructed me. In his own selfish interest, Principal Roy had persuaded the students to believe that I was a very strict man, and if I were allowed to function as Secretary, students would not be able to pass examinations. This false propaganda easily turned students against me. Initially, I had some altercation with a group of militant students. Afterwards, all the agitated students, who had assembled in the office, suddenly tried to assault me. I quickly moved into an adjoining room and bolted the door. The students tried to break open the door, but failed. Confined in the room, I started repeatedly chanting within myself the following two couplets from the *Chandi* and intensely praying for help to MA (Anandamayee), whom I looked upon as my Saviour.

[ TRANSLATED FROM SANSKRIT ]

(1) Wherever *rakhsasas* (monsters) and venomous snakes abound, wherever enemies and

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robbers lurk, wherever there is forest-fire, remaining there, and also on high seas, Thou art maintaining the universe.

(2) As Queen of the universe, Thou art maintaining it ; as soul of the universe, Thou art supporting it. Thou deservest the worship of the universe. Those who bow down to Thee can give protection to the universe.

Meanwhile, the Head Clerk of the College informed on the telephone my brothers, the President of the College (Dr. B. N. Dey) and the police to the effect that students had kept me confined and were threatening to kill me as soon as I would come out. After I spent over half-an-hour prayerfully in the room, my sixth brother, Biren, knocked at my door. I opened the door, took him inside and told him that the police had been informed and when the police arrived, we would go out under police escort. After a short while, we heard a noisy row outside. Hearing it, Biren said, "Shyam (our youngest brother) was coming behind me ; perhaps, students have attacked him". Both Biren and I now went out, and very soon a free fight broke out between myself and my two brothers on one side and forty-to-fifty students on the other side. During this unequal fight, I lost two teeth and sat down

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extremely tired and totally exhausted. In this situation, one student picked up a three-foot-long heavy iron pipe and was ready to strike me with it. Sitting with my head covered with both hands, helplessly I started praying to MA intensely. As I was struck with the pipe on my back, an inch-wide red and blue, continuous swelled mark was produced which extended diagonally right across my back from neck to waist. It was indeed miraculous that I felt no pain whatsoever at the moment or at any time later. But as soon as the pipe fell on my back, a very clear, loud inner voice gave me the order, "Fall down". Simultaneously, some unseen force gave me a sudden push and felled me on one side. In obedience to the order of the inner voice, I also pretended that I had fainted. Had I felt any serious pain, when struck, some words expressive of the pain or a scream would have naturally come out of me. Then, it would have been impossible for me to pretend unconsciousness as successfully as I did. On seeing that I was lying motionless, some teachers, who were looking on as unconcerned spectators, cried out, "He is dead, he is dead". At this, the rowdy students took fright (lest they would be prosecuted on a charge of murder), ran away and took shelter in the hostel located in the

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second floor of the building. Some time later a police sub-inspector with some constables came to the College. They arrested and brought down ten or twelve students and made them squat in the ground-floor. After I regained consciousness (that is, after I shook off my feigned unconsciousness and sat up), the sub-inspector took down my statement and marched the arrested students to the police station. When departing, the sub-inspector took from the College office the address of Principal Roy's residence. There, he too was arrested. At last, on Principal Roy and the arrested students offering unqualified apology, the criminal case against them was withdrawn. As a sequel, Principal Roy was dismissed and I had to take up the offices of both Principal and Secretary and work in the dual capacity for eleven years up to 1949.

The most significant fact that emerged out of the above incident is just this : *Through sincere prayer, a devotee of God is miraculously saved from any grave danger with the least possible physical injury, pain or loss.*

With the students of the same College, I had another misunderstanding and confrontation ten years later in 1948. There was an agitation among the students on the question of Govern-

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ment recognition for the College. The students held that although the College had no government recognition, the Governing Body of the College was falsely declaring that the College was recognised. When the agitation grew strong, I called a meeting of students, so that I could explain to them what the Governing Body had to say on the point. At this meeting, I produced letters from M. P., Assam and other State Governments, offering posts to our past students and appointing them in various posts. I read out some of these letters, which I had collected in a file. Upon this, the student-leaders said, "We don't trust those letters". Then, I said, "If you don't trust these letters, I have nothing more to say. Then, allow me to go". The leaders declared openly, "We won't allow you to go". At first, I thought of clearing my way through the crowd of students by punching right and left. But I heard a clear warning in exactly the following terms, "You won't succeed ; don't try". This kind of inner warning saved me from imminent grave dangers many times in my eventful life. On hearing this warning, my behaviour underwent a dramatic change. I was neatly dressed in trousers and shirt and standing on a higher platform. Instantly, I sat on this platform in perfect yogic

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posture, with my backbone and neck kept erect and eyes closed. I started praying intensely to MA ( whom I always regarded as identical with Krishna) in the following terms : *Ma,* when humiliated and harassed by Duhshashana in the royal court of the Kurus, Draupadi, lifting her both arms and abandoning all efforts at resistance, supplicated to you for help, you did save her honour. I too am abandoning all efforts. Do kindly save me from these ferocious wolves". When a few minutes passed in this way, some student suddenly cried out, "He has fainted". I was not unconscious, I heard the cry. At this time, my faithful guard, a valiant Rajput, sensing some trouble, was waiting outside the meeting hall. On hearing the cry, he came inside the hall and shouting, *"hatiye, hatiye"* (please move off), made his way through the crowd and came near me. As he lifted me up, some students also helped him. When the guard tried to carry me away, I placed my head on his shoulder (pretending to be unconscious, as hinted by the student's cry). The guard carried me into my office and seated me on an arm-chair. I laid my head on the table in my front and sat motionless and prayerful. Most of the students were afraid that I might die, and in the event of my death, they

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might be prosecuted on a charge of murder. So they left the meeting in hot haste. Some daring student-leaders loitred for a while in front of my office. Peeping through the window, when they found that I was still motionless, they too ran away. When I felt sure that there was no student in the vicinity, I opened my eyes, raised my head and mentally bowing down to MA, left the College with a smile on my face. I realised that no devil could touch a hair of a person who took refuge in MA.

Now, I shall relate an event, which, but for MA's direct physical intervention, would have resulted in a serious mishap. At Calcutta, MA had once told me that if I had any question, I should put it to her mentally, and I would get answer. As my dangers and difficulties were repeatedly overcome through MA's tangible, divine grace, a curious problem or doubt arose in my mind. I thought that at the battle of *Kurukshetra* (as described in the *Mahabharata*), Krishna, even in violation of his solemn promise that he will not wield arms in favour of either party, took up Arjuna's cause and twice aggressively ran towards Bhishma, once with his *Sudarshan Chakra* and a second time, with a horse-whip. "As MA is none other than Krishna,

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will not MA physically intervene and save me, if in her presence some enemies attack me ?" was the unearthly question that once arose in my mind and almost haunted me. How one day I got a fitting reply to this childish question, I am going to narrate. One day (I cannot recall the date), several of us (MA's devotees) were returning from Nabadwip to Calcutta by train. MA was in the same train. She was in the First Class. At some station on the way, she got down and boarded the Third Class carriage in which we had occupied a compartment. In our compartment, besides myself, Jatish Da (p. 10) and Rooma Devi (*) were travelling. Between our bench and the bench occupied by MA, there was a low wooden partition, which also acted as a back-rest. Jatish Da said to me, "Brother, don't allow any crowd into the compartment. Rooma Devi usually feels sick in train-journey. If there is a crowd, she will be inconvenienced". I was sitting near the door. I was obstructing

* Rooma Devi was a devout old lady ; born and bronght up in Almora District, U. P. She was a disciple of Sharada MA (wife of Shri Ramkrishna Paramhansa). She had an *ashram* on the route from Almora to Kailash, where she served and nursed pilgrims, particularly those who fell ill. She spent her last years at MA's *ashrams*, serving MA and her devotees and utilising all spare time in prayer and meditation. She expired at Varanasi Ashram on 7th March 1953.

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crowd at every station, when the train stopped. Trouble arose, when at some station, I obstructed a group of three stout, well-built young men, one of whom gave me a blow. I raised my right foot, ready to kick him. Suddenly, I was stunned to see MA's entire right arm fully stretched over the partition and right over my right shoulder. I became afraid to think that MA might have noticed my kicking posture. I at once withdrew my foot. After a short while, MA withdrew her extended arm and while still sitting, said, "I was lying down with my head resting on Booni's (†) lap. While thus lying down, I noticed blood on Naren's (i.e., my) head. Instantly, this body sat up and behaved like that. Usually, when any such thing happens, this body remains calm and quiet and simply looks on entirely unconcerned. Only today, the body sat up and behaved like that". All the while, I paid no heed to the attacking youths outside the compartment. After I heard MA, I looked towards the door and found nobody there. I thought that seeing some dreadful form of MA, as she stared at them, the aggressors must have taken fright and run away. From this strange behaviour and subsequent

† See foot-note on p. 39.

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statement of MA, I got a suitable reply to the erratic question that was haunting me. I realised that if any devotee of MA were attacked by enemies, in her presence, she too would, like Krishna, take effective physical action against them, with the difference that MA would take up no weapon. She would overcome and rout her devotee's enemies only by her posture and glance.

Now, I shall describe how through this our MA's grace, I was saved from imminent death as a victim of a fierce communal riot. The communal trouble, which burst forth in Park Circus area of Calcutta in September 1946, spread like wild fire to Raja Bazar, Mechua Bazar, Khidirpore and other areas and continued for several months. On some date in March 1947, early in the morning, I, in the company of a teacher (whose surname was 'Ghosh') and a student (whose surname was 'Kumar'), went by car to Basirhat (50 miles due East of Calcutta) on a private business. Before that date, all areas in Calcutta were calm and quiet for over a fortnight. The car, which belonged to Kumar, was a sedan-body Baby Austin. When we returned to Calcutta, the car reached the five-road junction of Shyam-bazar at about 10 p. m. Kumar was driving.

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Ghosh sat on his left. I was alone on the back-seat, where I sat close to the window on my left. The window was kept lowered. We had the plan to drive along Circular Road towards Sealdah. But on noting that all the roads meeting at the crossing were ominously too lonely, we apprehended that riot had flared up. Kumar said to me, "Sir, I shall not drive along Circular Road". Saying this, he drove along Shyambazar Street and Chittaranjan Avenue. On seeing that there was no traffic on Chittaranjan Avenue, I felt sure that there was trouble. Feeling ourselves helpless, I started remembering MA. I imagined that MA herself was seated in the car and carrying me in her arms. My eyes were wide open. But I could see very little as my mind was turned inward. Once I indistinctly saw that the car had turned left and entered Harrison Road (now Mahatma Gandhi Road). What happened after that I could not know. Because, on Harrison Road, some miscreant hit me hard with a large piece of broken concrete and I instantly lost consciousness. When I regained consciousness, I found that the car was moving rather slowly. I felt a little pain on the left side of my neck and on the back of my head. Feeling the neck, I knew that the skin was bruised. Touching the back of my

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head, I found a little blood. Now I informed Ghosh and Kumar that the ruffians had hit me. They said, "We know". In fact (as Ghosh and Kumar narrated to me), after hitting me, the rowdies tried to stop our car by placing a hand-cart across the road, which was cleverly by-passed by Kumar driving very fast. They also saw the horrible sight of a standing pedestrian's head being hammered with a brick. Extremely frightened, Ghosh was repeatedly urging Kumar to drive still faster. Kumar too drove at top speed and soon reached the safe zone of College Street. Then passing through Mirzapur Street and reaching Amherst Street, both Ghosh and Kumar tried to speak to me. As I did not respond, they knew that I was unconscious. I asked Kumar why he was driving so slowly. He said, "I am looking for some dispensary, where you may receive some first aid". I said, "You won't have any dispensary open tonight. So, take me to my residence at Bhowanipur". Kumar drove the car along Bowbazar Street to Sealdah, where Ghosh (who was to go to Beliaghata) got down. Then, Kumar said to me, "Sir, just see, my hands are shaky ; I am unable to do any more driving". A Bengalee constable was standing nearby, I beckoned to him to come near the car. I told

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him all that happened to us and requested him to take his seat by Kumar's side, so that he could overcome his nervousness and drive with steady hands. The good constable readily agreed. With the constable sitting by his side, Kumar now drove straight to my place at Bhowanipur, where I got down. That night, it was solely through our MA's bounteous grace that I was saved (along with Ghosh and Kumar) from being brutally killed by heartless *goondas*. Besides, as I became totally unconscious at the very start of the attack, I had no share of the extreme fear, excitement and anxiety, which fell to the lot of both Ghosh and Kumar. Again, since the missile thrown at me, hit me on the muscle of the neck, my injury was superficial and negligible. If it hit me only an inch higher, I would have got a broken skull ; if it hit me an inch lower, I would have a collar-bone broken.

I shall now narrate how in a critical financial situation, MA directly solved my dilemma and brought me permanent relief. In 1949, within two years of our Independence, when I was still working as Principal and Secretary of Calcutta Engineering College (p. 69 ), I found that the State Government had spent large sums of money and founded a number of new institutions for

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imparting technical education in a big way. So, that year, mainly at my instance, the Governing Body of Calcutta Engineering College arranged to hand over the College to the Education Department of the State Government. As I was somewhat independent-spirited, I was removed from the post of Principal. The person, who was made Principal and Secretary in my place, was, like myself, an engineer, qualified from Sibpur College, but junior to me by four years. Of course, the Government offered me a junior post under the new Principal, which I could not accept. Thus, at the age of 55 years, I got 'unemployment' as the State Government's reward for eleven years' hard work and teaching service rendered at Calcutta. I did not have any bank balance to fall back upon. So I had to face a highly disturbing financial situation. But as my two well-educated, unmarried daughters were suitably employed, my family was never in acute distress. Under these circumstances, I was at a loss to decide what I should do to earn some income myself to relieve excessive strain on my daughters. The institution (Indian Engineering Institute) that I was running at Connaught place, New Delhi, prior to 1938, had gradually shrunk during my eleven years' absence and had become un-

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profitable by now. So my problem was whether I should revert to New Delhi and try to revitalise my old institution or wind it up, sell out its assets and settle down in Calcutta on the entirely new career of a Consulting Engineer. I was in a dilemma. Unable to decide one way or the other, I resolved to depend entirely on MA, seek her decision and follow it implicitly. Thus, I decided to meet MA at Dehra Dun before proceeding to New Delhi to either run my old institution with renewed vigour or dissolve it for good.

On reaching Dehra Dun, I found MA busily engaged in attending functions held according to a pre-fixed program. It was difficult to fix up an appointment with her for a private talk. Still, I requested Gurupriya Didi to inform MA that I badly wanted to have a private interview with her. In the afternoon on the day when I planned to leave for New Delhi, I chanced to see MA standing in the verandah of the Ashram, sipping a glass of water. She appeared to be in a hurry to return to the pandal (where some function was being held). When I got near and bowed down to her, she endearingly said, "*Baba*, tell me what you have to say". Avoiding all details, I said, "*Ma*, I am having various difficulties in Calcutta and am thinking of returning to New Delhi.

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What's your opinion about it ?" Instantly she said, "Yes, *Baba,* go to New Delhi".

As directed by MA, I went to New Delhi. There, on entering the office of my Institute, I met two Punjabi youths waiting to meet me. They said to me, "Sir, we attend office in day-time and in the evening attend A. M. I. E. Classes, run by Mr. Sen Gupta. We pay him a tuition fee of Rs. 25 per month. We are not satisfied with his teaching. We are eight in a party. If you start A. M. I. E. Classes, we shall all join and pay you a tuition fee of Rs. 50 per student per month. Do kindly start A. M. I. E. Classes at your Institute". Thus, following MA's sound direction, as soon as I arrived at New Delhi, I had the prospect of having an additional income of at least Rs. 400 per month. There was another good omen. When, a few days later, my advertisement for A. M. I. E. Classes was first published in a local daily, that very day, my Sindhi ex-student, Kripaldas Sainani (who had worked as my Chief Assistant for over five years) met me and joined me again as my Chief Assistant. Through faultless administration and herculean efforts of Sainani, apart from my own reputation for sound tuitional services, the Institute at New Delhi made rapid progress.


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Thus, MA's inspired counsel solved my dilemma and ended for good the grave financial crisis, which in 1949 confronted both myself and Sainani (who had lost all property, he had in Sind).

Now I shall briefly describe how Sainani had a radical recovery from a serious and protracted illness by following MA's unfailing advice and also had a good measure of MA's spontaneous grace. In 1952, Sainani suffered for several months from continuous fever and multiple fistula appearing again and again. He was having homeopathic treatment, which proved ineffective. It occurred to me that he might need a surgical operation. So, I sent him for examination to Dr. Santosh Sen, the most renowned surgeon in New Delhi, whose father, Dr. J. K. Sen, was an old, ardent devotee of MA. Dr. Sen correctly diagnosed Sainani's illness as tubercular fistula and prescribed an X-ray examination of his lungs. With the X-ray plate, I myself met Dr. Sen. Pointing his finger at the plate, Dr. Sen said, "Look, the disease was in the lungs. Now it has shifted to the rectum ; but marks of attack on the lungs can be seen. The disease cannot be radically cured by operation alone". As prescribed by Dr. Sen, Sainani had sixty injections

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in thirty days. After this, on examination, Dr. Sen opined that the T. B. was no more and Sainani's case was fit for operation. At this stage, MA came to New Delhi. Sainani met her in the company of my son. After bowing down to her, Sainani sought MA's opinion with folded hands. He had, meanwhile, contacted a *hakim* (indigenous physician), who would cure him by applying medicine, so that operation could be avoided. Sainani enquired of MA if he should have an operation by Dr. Sen or get himself treated by the *hakim*. MA definitely told him that he would be cured by the *hakim* and need not undergo operation. So, following MA's advice, Sainani was completely cured.

Saved from a grave malady, through MA's grace, Sainai became an ardent devotee. Whenever he found an opportunity, Sainani had *darshan* of MA at New Delhi, Brindaban, Hardwar and even at Agarpara (near Calcutta). With deep reverence and great earnestness, Sainani got formal initiation from Muktananda Giri (Didima, MA's mother) at Hardwar in 1970. In June 1972, after a brief three days' illness, Sainani breathed his last, uttering the name of Rama in full consciousness.

I shall now close this Chapter after relating how one day in October 1965, I narrowly escaped an imminent, painful death by getting run over by a tram-car just near Kalighat Tram Depot in Calcutta. I had got an intimation that clothes belonging to our servant at Kalyani

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(West Bengal) had been stolen. So to purchase some new clothes for the servant, I went first to Kali Katra (a cloth market) at Kalighat, where I purchased one *dhoti*. Then, as I was crossing the tram lines to go to Hawkers' Corner (another cloth-market), on the other side of Russa Road, through the corner of my specs, I indistinctly saw something speeding towards me. On turning round, I found an electric tram-car rushing towards me. The car was so close to me that I was totally confused and could not escape. Standing firmly in the middle of the track, I fully extended my right arm, as if to stop the car. As soon as the palm of my hand contacted the front of the car, its thrust threw me off by several feet, so that I sat in the middle of the track with my hips on the ground, my face towards the fast-moving car and both legs fully strctched towards the car. As I was at a few feet away from the car, the cautious and highly alert driver turned the brake-handle with desperate vigour to stop the car. During the second or so that elapsed, I could not remember MA, as I used to do at all critical moments. Like an automaton, I only muttered within myself, "The car won't touch me", as if I was exerting will-force unawares. I did not even withdraw my stretched legs. I

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was astonished to see that the car quickly slowed down and came to a dead stop only two inches short of my outstretched feet. Only now I realised what would have happened if I did not extend my right arm and was not thrown to some distance or if the heaven-inspired driver took even a hundredth of a second longer to stop the car. I would have been simply run over by, and crushed under, the car. It is noteworthy that I was carrying in the left upper pocket of my shirt a note-book to the inside cover of which a small photo of MA was pasted. Remaining hidden in the photo, MA got all events carefully adjusted in my favour and saved me. I always carry this note-book with the photo, whenever I go out of doors. This photo of MA acts as an infallible talisman, guarding me against all evils and mishaps.

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CHAPTER 6

## MA IN THE ROLE OF PURIFIER

One afternoon (I am unable to recall the date), I had a brief private dialogue with MA at Birla Temple at Ballygunge (p. 32) on how, impure as our minds are, we could receive MA's unstinted help regarding our inner purification and eradication of all faults and blemishes, so that we could aspire to be taken into her affectionate arms, even as the human mother carefully cleanses the soiled body of her little baby before she takes it fondly into her own arms. What MA told me in this connection had the following reassuring purport : "If you can take refuge in me in perfect confidence, I shall have to undertake the necessary purification".

A remarkably ugly trait in my character was *militancy*. I would often hit (*i.e.*, physically hurt or assault) a person on slightest provocation. With what subtle dexterity—and in my own interest—MA made a successful effort at removing this deep-rooted fault in my nature, I shall narrate in full details.

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The incident, through which MA's own purification-plan came to light, happened on Sunday, 6th January 1940. Around this date, MA stayed for over two months in Giribala's *Kalibari* (*) at Agarpara, near Calcutta. To this *Kalibari*, accompanied by my brother Biren, I used to come on Sunday mornings and spend a few hours in MA's hallowed company. On some Sundays, we would come a second time in the evening as well.

About six months prior to above date, one day I received at Calcutta a telegram from Swami Akhandananda (p. 10) at Dacca, which read as follows : MA WANTS YOU COME DACCA IMMEDIATELY. On receiving the telegram, I took a few days' leave and went to Dacca. I spent three or four days at Ramna (Dacca) Ashram. But during these days, I had no inkling as to why MA had urgently summoned me to Dacca. When the period of my leave nearly ran out, I met MA and put to her the question : "*Ma*, may I leave Dacca tomorrow ?" MA replied, "I

* This *Kalibari* (shrine of *Ma Kali*) resembles the famous Kali Temple at Dakshineshwar. As at Dakshineshwar, in this *Kalibari*, there are 12 Shiva Temples and a Temple of Radha-Krishna. There is also a beautiful marble-paved *Nat Mandir* (audience hall). In this *Kalibari*, there are several rooms in a row, overlooking the Ganges, where MA and her party stayed.

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am to leave Dacca day after tomorrow. You better accompany me". Accordingly, I set out by steamer from Narayanganj with MA's party. On arriving at Munshiganj, that steamer halted for over two hours for some unknown reason. We all got down here and in a number of boats went to Biren Da's (*) residence. As specially arranged by MA herself, only Biren Da and I were with MA in one boat. It was rainy season and all land in East Bengal was completely submerged. At MA's instance, our boat was tied up with rope near the top of a lofty date tree, which was all but submerged. Sitting in the still boat, MA made to us many complaints against Abhoy (†) and another Brahmachari (‡). She went on fluently describing numerous acts of indiscipline, discourtesy and even violence, perpetrated by

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* 'Biren Da' is Shri Biren Mukherjee, eldest son of Swami Akhandananda, who was at this time Principal of Munshiganj College. He was an erudite scholar, also an ardent devotee of MA. He was a fluent orator. He could keep a large audience spell-bound for hours by narrating amazing anecdotes concerning MA in either Bengali or English. Before his death a few years ago, he was leading, for several years, a secluded and intensely spiritual life under MA's special instructions and guidance.

† Abhoy's original name was 'Bhola'. MA gave him the name 'Abhoy' (which means 'fearless').

‡ *Brahmachari* is a spiritual aspirant, who leads a strictly chaste life, engaged in meditation and other spiritual practices.

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them against other ashramites including ladies, and even against MA herself. While listening to MA's vehement accusations, I kept looking at her face and wondered that if she ever took to a lawyer's profession, she would be unequalled in forensic ability. I have forgotten the details of most of the complaints made by MA. I only distinctly remember that she prefaced her stern accusations with the remark : " Two demons have appeared". I had never before heard this type of strong language uttered by MA. That Abhoy was disregarding MA's orders and would even strike MA's sacred person in a fit of anger, I had observed myself. I had also heard that he had once demanded that MA must give him one hour's time daily for having private dialogue with her and that MA had fulfilled his unreasonable demand for quite a long period.

On hearing those complaints from MA, I reflected why out of all her devotees MA selected me and Biren Da for reporting her complaints, although MA knew very well that both of us had highly irritable temper and were too militant. Carefully thinking, I concluded that MA wanted us to adopt some effective punitive measures against them.

By boat, we all reached Biren Da's residence

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in MA's company. As I was to return quickly to Munshiganj Jetty to catch steamer and proceed to Goalando, I took my meal at Biren Da's place. When at parting, I bowed down to MA, she whispered into my ear : "*Baba*, don't report all this to *Ma* (meaning Mrs. C) ; she will be unnecessarily pained". I never told anybody anything about MA's complaints.

Ere this, once at Vindhyachal Ashram (in U. P.), on witnessing some wayward behaviour of Abhoy, I had said to MA : "*Ma*, I know that you can easily overcome and control Abhoy only by casting an appropriate glance ; why don't you do that ?" Affectionately indulgent as MA is, she said in reply : "He is destined to commit suicide. Until that event passes off, it will not be good to take any harsh measure against him".

However, on my return to Calcutta and brooding over MA's complaints, I remained on the look-out of an opportunity, determined to give Abhoy a good thrashing, as soon as possible. This sought-for opportunity I got on above-noted Sunday at the *Nat Mandir* of Giribala *Kalibari* at Agarpara.

That winter morning, MA was seated in an easy-chair at one end of the *Nat Mandir*. MA's head and body were in the shade. The rising

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sun was warming up her feet only. I took my seat on the marble pavement very close to MA, in such a manner that the shadow of my head just touched MA's sun-bathed feet. Only a few days ago, a new rule was enforced, by which devotees were prevented from touching MA's feet. So, thus seated, when the shadow of my head fell at MA's feet, I felt elated. Jatish Da (p. 10) was seated in the shade at some distance from me. On seeing that my bald head was basking in the sun, Jatish Da rather loudly said, "Brother Naren, the sun is warming up your head. Move a little and sit in the shade". At this, I retorted, "Nowadays, you don't allow anybody to touch MA's feet. Today, only the shadow of my head is touching MA's feet. Is that too unbearable for you ?" Of course, I did not move off from my carefully-secured seat.

At that hour, in that *Nat Mandir*, in MA's holy presence, there was a calm, blissful and serene atmosphere of reverence and devotion. We all were experiencing a celestial joy, looking silently at MA's enchanting and enigmatic face. Sitting in the shade, at a short distance from me, Abhoy was busy reading out and expounding extracts from the *Shrimat-Bhagavat* or some such scripture. Suddenly, he loudly made the

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irrelevant remark, "Bholanath (p. 2) was a liar". On hearing this remark, I instantly warned Abhoy in the following terms : "Look here, Abhoy, Bholanath is my *Guru* (Spiritual Teacher * ). I won't tolerate any aspersion cast on him. If you repeat your objectionable remark, I must give you a sound thrashing". Abhoy was extremely impatient and stubborn. He ignored my clear warning and repeated the remark. Now, I was mad with rage. I stood up at my place, ready to attack him. But as my body suddenly swelled in rage, the *dhoti*, wrapped around my waist, got loose and fell off. (As I always wear an underwear below the *dhoti*, I was not completely bare). So, feeling extremely embarrassed and ashamed, I sat down. After this, Abhoy once more repeated the same remark. This time, I carefully tied up my *dhoti* around my waist and stood up a second time at my place, ready to assail Abhoy. But my brother Biren, a husky youth, was sitting just behind me. When he found that I was too furious and might even kill Abhoy, he promptly stood up and putting his both arms round my waist, clasped me so firmly that I could not stir. Disconcerted once more, I sat down again. Alarmed by my aggressive pose,

* See p. 46-47.

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Abhoy stood up and ran into hiding behind MA's easy-chair.

After this, for quite a good while, the atmosphere in the *Nat Mandir* was grim, gloomy, sullen and stagnant. Breaking the unbearable silence, MA first put to me the question,—"*Baba*, were you too angry ?" "Yes *Ma*, I was too angry", I replied. "Did you want to beat Abhoy ?" was her next question. "Yes, *Ma*, I did want to beat him", was my reply. On hearing this reply, MA proceeded to adopt a measure to eradicate the deep-rooted, fatal trait in my character, namely *militancy*, which was as effective as it was unique, unprecedented and unthinkable. "Strike me instead of him", she said to me and instantly extended her left hand towards me with the palm upside. I warmly gripped MA's tender hand between my both hands and sat still, quite dumb-founded and bewildered. But when she ordered me three times, saying 'Strike ! Strike ! Strike !', like a lifeless automaton, I became ready to carry out that stern order. MA's hand was resting above the palm of my left hand. My right hand was above MA's hand with palm downward. Raising my right hand a little, I struck mildly on the palm of MA's left hand and said, "I have struck". Then MA ordered, "Strike

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harder". In obedience, I raised my right hand a little higher this time and struck her left hand a little harder and declared, "Here, I have struck". Now, MA passed the order, "Strike still harder". This time, I raised my right hand much higher and struck her left hand rather hard for the third time and exclaimed, "Here, I have struck". Now, MA said to me, "*Baba*, my hand is held in your hands. Thus touching my person, make a vow that you will never beat anybody in future". I submitted : "*Ma*, pray don't ask me to make such a vow. I won't make it." Then MA became more lenient. She said, "Well, promise that you will try not to strike". So finally, touching MA's sacred body, I made the solemn promise, "I will try not to strike".

In the previous Chapter, I narrated (p. 67) that in July 1938, in a scuffle with the students of Calcutta Engineering College, I lost two teeth. In October, same year, I met MA at Hardwar. On hearing details about the scuffle, MA warned me saying, "*Baba*, you have already lost two teeth in a fray. Don't join in any scuffle in future." To this wise warning, my arrogant reply was,— "I have still thirty more teeth left intact. I shall be able to carry on more fights". From this insolent reply, MA realised that militancy was

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my deep-rooted, incurable malady. So she drew up her master-plan. According to this plan, she first complained to me against Abhoy and thus roused my spirit of militancy against him. Then, she so manipulated events that I made two abortive efforts at violently attacking him in her presence, had my spirit of militancy exhausted by making me strike her own person and finally extracted from me the promise that I must try to abandon militancy.

From all that happened on that memorable Sunday, I learnt two important lessons of my life : (1) it is impossible to strike any person, unless MA permits ; (2) striking any other person is equivalent to striking MA herself.

How far I was cured of the evil trait of militancy was demonstrated by an incident, which happened in May 1946, during the birthday celebrations of MA held at Ekdalia Place (Calcutta) Ashram. I was Secretary of the Committee formed to organise and look after the celebrations. One night, *Nader Nimai*—a highly popular drama—was to be staged in the commodious pandal erected near the Ashram. The pandal was so overcrowded with audience that no more persons could be accommodated. In this situation, four or five stout local youths arrived

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and tried to get in forcibly. I pushed them out. In view of overcrowdedness, I myself did not get in. After the play started, I was returning home. The turned-out, aggrieved youths, who were waiting at the turn of the street, intercepted me and asked me why I pushed them out. I tried to explain that the pandal was already overcrowded. If I allowed them in, they themselves would be inconvenienced, and those who had already got in would also be more seriously inconvenienced. But the youths would not listen to reason. They said, "We will thrash you". But as I was determined not to resort to violence, I bent down my head and said, "Well, beat me if you want to". They tauntingly said, "Oh, you have become Gandhi ! So you are saying 'beat me' ". I replied, "I have not become Gandhi. You wanted to beat me, so I am asking you to beat me". They muttered some inaudible remarks and slowly melted away. I came out leisurely on the main road, boarded a tram-car and returned home. That night, if prompted by my old militant spirit, I attempted to punch the youths—I was over 52 years then—so many stout youths would have battered me to death. At this hour, MA was in the pandal nearby. She must have witnessed and heard everything with

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her subtle eyes and ears and helped me to restrain my aggressive nature and saved me thereby.*

For any spiritual aspirant plodding along the path of God-realisation, egoism or conceit is an insuperable obstacle. Towards the end of my successful working career, I developed a conceit for excessive charity and wrongly thought that I could spend any amount on charity. One day in 1960 (or thereabout), at Varanasi Ashram, Mrs. C complained to MA as follows : "*Ma*, in Calcutta, we live in a rented house. Your son (meaning myself) does not save any money. He spends away in charity whatever he earns. When he will pass away, I shall be thrown on the street. Kindly order him to save some money and build a house". MA immediately wanted to know to whom and how much I give every month. On oral accounting, it came out that my expenses on charity totalled Rs. 400-500 per month. MA next told me to build a house. I frankly said, "*Ma*, I have no money. If you give me enough money, I shall build a house". MA further said, "I shall not ask you to stop charity. But a house-holder should not be too charitable. He has to save

*In this context, the reader should refer to a similar, but much graver incident, described on pages 70—72.



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money". After this, she once more said to me at Agarpara Ashram, rather emphatically: "*Baba*, you must limit your charity. In this world, the need of the poor is unlimited. Your capacity for practising charity is too limited. What fraction of human misery can you relieve ?" But MA's salutary advice and strong remonstrance failed to rouse my practical wisdom. My conceit for generosity did not abate. My addiction to charity was not cured, although in the core of my heart, I cherished a desire for going by MA's beneficial counsel. At last, my conceit misled me to adopt a dangerous, suicidal course. I foolishly started praying to MA as follows : "*Ma*, if you want that I should cut down my expenses on charity, do kindly cut down my income, then expenses on charity will automatically go down". MA did grant my arrogant prayer and made me realise that for a house-holder, this sort of adverse prayer is far more harmful and reprehensible than excessive charity.

Besides, I had the conceit that I am unparalleled in India in ability to write books suitable for students of Engineering. There was some basis for this conceit. In 1965, through MA's grace, a renowned publishing firm of New

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Delhi purchased the entire stock of my unsold books on high discount and paid me a large sum of money. So I thought that if I would write books and publish them myself, they would be quickly sold out and bring me huge profits. Accordingly, I worked hard, wrote out and published two big volumes on Engineering Mathematics in 1967 and 1969. But unfortunately, although highly appreciated by some Professors and by all Students, who purchased and studied them, they did not command any extensive sale. Hence, as I had invested large sums on the publications, I ran into loss and heavy debts. But when I had larger income, I used to defray all domestic expenses myself, leaving my two earning unmarried daughters free to save some money, with which they were able to build a fairly large, two-storeyed house on the plot of land that I had purchased at Kalyani (West Bengal). At this house, which I now own through MA's grace, MA attended the Home-Entry Ceremony on 11th July 1965 and stayed (in a room, kept reserved for her ever since) for a brief period of twenty-eight hours, from 12 noon on 11th to 4 p. m. on 12th July 1965.

Today (March 1978), through MA's abound-

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ing grace, my conceit for benevolence and addiction to charity are totally gone. My superiority-complex in respect of authorship of books has vanished too. Thus, through specially contrived measures and subtle, judicious manipulation of events, MA has carried out the onerous task of my inner purification, which I once reliantly prayed to her to undertake.

I shall now close this Chapter after briefly narrating how gracious MA has already largely purified and has still been purifying Abhoy. Abhoy had some remarkably noble traits. He had a deep, instinctive and thorough knowledge of various tunes and rhythms of Indian music. As a leading singer, he could make any *nam-keertan* highly impressive and effective. For this one particular qualification, more than anything else, he won great popularity everywhere and more notably among MA's numerous ardent devotees in New Delhi, where he lived continuously for several years. Barring Bhaiji (*), no other male devotee got so much opportunity to associate with MA so intimately and for such a long period.

The chief evil trait of his character was conceit over his knowledge of scriptures—both genuine and feigned—and more particularly over

* See foot-note on p. 10.

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his *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and innate spirit of renunciation. As a result of this conceit, he would unhesitatingly slight, belittle and insult even those of MA's elderly house-holder devotees, who were generally respected for sound erudition and high social position. He would wantonly ignore MA's patently well-meaning orders and strict injunctions.

After the destined event of his attempted suicide (p. 88) was over, MA secured Abhoy's consent and got him married (*) with a girl of the *Kanyapeetha* (Girls' College) at Varanasi Ashram and thus purified him to a remarkable extent by laying axe at the main root of his conceit. Afterwards, having passed through various adverse circumstances, generally attendant on a domestic life, Abhoy's physical health completely broke down. Lately, MA removed his wife (her name is Jamuna) to Varanasi Ashram and accommodated Abhoy in another Ashram and made adequate arrangements for his medical treatment and recoupment of health. Thus, benign and ever-affectionate MA has been

* This marriage was held at Berhampur (West Bengal) on 1st March 1946. Swami Muktananda Giri (MA's mother) was present at this marriage. MA too was present on the same date at Berhampur, but at another place.

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carrying out the difficult task of Abhoy's purification as carefully and as effectively as mine. To MA, all children are equal, whatever their merits or demerits. Probably, the wayward child receives special care and closer attention since it desperately needs them.

Who will recount, out of MA's countless devotees all over India and abroad, whom and where and by adopting what ingenious measures, MA has already carried out and has still been carrying out the inner purification of all those, who have been reliant on her and have earnestly yearned for her divine help and unerring guidance on the long and difficult path leading to God-realisation ?

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CHAPTER 7

## NOTABLE SAYINGS AND EVENTS

I had numerous opportunities of going to MA and staying with her for a few days each time at different places. Sometimes, I went alone. At other times, one or more members of my family accompanied me. Thus, I witnessed many *leelas* (divine plays) in which MA had a leading role and heard many sound sayings that she uttered. In this Chapter, I shall give a brief account of only such of those sayings and *leelas*, as I consider worth noting and as I am able to recollect distinctly through the passage of decades, with MA's special grace.

### (1)

### "Bare feet should not be shown to them"

One day in June 1937, when Mrs. C and I were at Almora, to see MA and her party off to Kailash (as narrated in Chapter 4), I put to her the following question : "On many occasions, we notice that you very carefully cover up your both feet with several folds of cloth. Why do you take so much pains to cover them ? Do you

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want that we should never look at your feet ?" MA replied, "It is not as you think. You do not know that so many astral (bodyless) beings,—gods, godesses, saints, *rishis* and *munis* come to see this body (*i.e.*, myself). Bare feet should not be shown to them".

(2)

**"Don't test me"**

Bhaiji (*) breathed his last in MA's presence at Almora on 17th August 1937. That very day, his body was buried at Patalpuri, a suburb of Almora. MA wanted to visit the place of burial. But apprehending that a visit to the burial place might aggravate MA's grief (†), Bholanath remonstrated. This resulted in MA's passing into a deep *samadhi* (‡). In a completely unconscious state, she was taken by bus and train to Kishenpur (Dehra Dun) Ashram. After three days, she regained consciousness and was able to talk. But for seventeen days, MA did not take any food at all. She only drank two or three teaspoonfuls of water three or four times in

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* See foot-note on p. 10.

† Bholanath knew very well that MA was above grief. But at that critical hour, he completely forgot it.

‡ *Samadhi* is a state of deep absorption in meditation leading to complete unconsciousness.

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twenty-four hours. I visited her at Kishenpur (Dehra Dun) Ashram one Sunday during these seventeen days. I found that while the upper part of her body—from head to waist—was warm and had sensation, the lower part of her body was still more or less completely paralysed and cold. If she was helped to sit up, the body would fall down, unless carefully supported on all sides. At dusk, when MA was lying on bed, I alone was sitting on the bed-side close to her head. I found that she was herself moving her hands and fingers, as if to exercise them. From this, I got the impression that MA was herself trying to recover. Somehow, I got it into my head that I should test her strength. I said, "*Ma*, will you clasp my hand, so that I can know how much strength you have regained ?" At this, MA became completely motionless and her bright and fair countenance suddenly darkened. Her eyes became sunken and half-closed. As she looked into my face, I was awfully frightened by her intolerably piercing gaze. In an unusually hoarse and masculine voice, she passed the stern order, "Don't test me". The next moment, however, she looked absolutely normal and resumed her gay and beaming appearance. My fright and trepidation were gone. Since then, I never

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thought of testing her a second time in any manner whatsoever.

(3)

**Why MA was abstaining from food**

When MA continued her fast, even having regained consciousness after *samadhi,* nobody could remotely guess the real reason for her fast. Being curious, I put to MA, the straight question, "Why are you not taking any food ?" MA's reply was terse but significant and easy to understand. She said, "In the wake of the *samadhi,* life had left the body for a while ; hence, the recovery is slow". From this, I understood that life was extinct and MA's body was dead for some time. Recovery from that state and revitalisation of all dead organs—stomach, kidney, intestine, etc., so that they can resume functioning normally, must take time. To take any food, before the organs become fully active once more, would be unreasonable and would only further delay the process of recovery. As I thus realised the real reason for MA's fast, I never implored her to take food as many other devotees did.

(4)

**Biren Da's futile effort at fasting**

When MA was observing fast at Dehra Dun

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Ashram, even having regained consciousness after *samadhi*, Biren Da (*) was staying at the Ashram. Biren Da looked upon MA verily as his own little daughter. When MA, with her body still partly paralysed, was helped to sit up, she was unhesitatingly reclining against Biren Da's body, for support. But inscrutabe are MA's ways. Even an ardent devotee of Biren Da's calibre could not correctly discern why MA was abstaining from food, and most of her devotees were insisting on her breaking the fast. That is why Biren Da repeatedly implored MA to take food. All his persuations having failed, Biren Da wanted to go on fast himself to make MA give up her fast. When MA dissuaded him from undertaking the fast, Biren Da bluntly declared, "Who are you to me, that I should go on fast for your sake ? I shall fast for my own health's sake". But Biren Da could not continue his fast against MA's wishes. After he abstained from food for a day, rashes appeared all over his body. Consequently, Biren Da had to abandon his fast (†). I am sure Biren Da later came to know

* See foot-note, p. 87.

† I came to know about Biren Da's futile effort at fasting from Mrs. C, who had the rare good fortune to serve and nurse MA continually during those critical days. Gurupriya Didi was not at Dehra Dun Ashram in those days to serve and look after MA.

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the real reason for MA's long abstention from food and regretted his attitude towards MA's refusal to take food.

(5)

**Disease-forms and devotees**

In March 1938, when Bholanath was at Tarapith (a shrine in West Bengal), he got an intimation that MA was suffering from high fever at Raipur (near Dehra Dun). On his way to Raipur, Bholanath halted at New Delhi and informed MA's devotees there about her illness. The New Delhi devotees deputed me to Raipur so that I could bring MA to New Delhi (evidently for medical treatment), if she would consent to come. At Raipur, I saw MA confined to bed in a room of the old, near-dilapidated *dharamsala* (free guest-house for pilgrims), attached to a Shiva Temple. MA was getting attacks of very high fever on alternate days. The fever would start in the evening and leave her the next morning. One morning, when she was free from fever, she said to me,—"Last evening, while I was conversing with you, the disease-form (MA could see the distinct subtle forms of different diseases) was sitting at the corner of the room and weeping. It wanted to enter this body (*i.e.*, my body).

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I told it to wait and enter this body after I finished the conversation". I said to MA,—"Will you please show me the disease-form ? I will strike it hard with a broom and chase it away". "Why should you drive it away ?" questioned MA. "You all love this body and like to play with it. The disease-forms also love this body and like to play with it. Why drive them out ?" argued MA. I was bewildered to learn that MA had the same love and concern for obnoxious disease-forms as for us, her privileged human devotees.

(6)

**MA appeared as Parvati ***

At a good distance (at least 200 ft.) from MA's room at Raipur Shiva Temple, an elderly Muslim devotee of MA used to patiently wait daily (often for hours on end) to have MA's *darshan* for even a minute or two. Being a Muslim, he was debarred from entering the precints of the Temple. One evening, just after sunset, I went to see this waiting devotee from close quarters. As I got near him, he stood up.

* *Parvati* is the name of Goddess Durga, the Universal Mother. Literally, *Parvati* means daughter of *Parvat* (mountain). It is believed that Mother Durga, after her voluntary death, was reborn as daughter of Himalaya, the king of mountains.

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His face was beaming with joy. I turned back and looked towards MA's room. There just in front of her room I saw MA in the beautiful form of *Parvati*, standing at the foot of the Himalayas. Her radiant face and exquisite features betrayed her divinity. I considered myself blessed to have this rare vision of MA. The Muslim devotee must be blessed a hundred times, since he enjoyed this vision daily through MA's grace.

(7)

**Why MA did not save Bhaiji (*)**

After Bhaiji's demise, I regretfully made a complaint to MA. I said, "*Ma*, Bhaiji was the chief of your devotees. At Almora, he passed away in your presence. Why did you not save him ?" MA's reply was apologetic. "How could I save him ?" she said. "He was continuously praying to me that he might die that time in my presence."

(8)

**Paths are not the same for all**

After the Durga Puja, held in MA's presence at Dehra Dun in October 1937, MA and her

* Bhaiji was the first and foremost of MA's devotees. (See foot-note on p. 10.)

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devotees went to Hardwar and stayed in Nanki Bai's Dharamsala. One day, when MA was sitting in a spacious hall (in the Dharamsala), with a crowd of some forty devotees, seated around her, the question arose : "Could there be one common religion for all ?" In answering the question, MA said, "How could that be ? Consider two leaves, which have grown side by side from one stem on a branch of a tree. If you critically compare them in all details, it will be found that they are not identically the same. There must be some difference in some part or other, of the two leaves. Likewise, no two persons are identically the same. So many of you have assembled here. You are all occupying different positions. Hence, if any two of you will try to come to me, since you are occupying different positions, your two paths leading to me, can never be indentical. Thus, the path to God for two persons, however similar, can never be the same. In the same way, paths followed by all seekers of God, *i.e.*, their religions, can never be the same."

( 9 )

**"*Sadhana* has to be done"**

Full of emotionalism, one day, in New Delhi, I said to MA, when I found her alone,

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"*Ma*, after we have seen you, we have no more duties to attend to." In support of my point, I quoted Paramhansa Ramkrishna Deb, who said, "If you light just one match-stick, in a room, which has been left dark for a thousand years, it is instantly lit up." At this, MA observed, "That is an odd plea, persons like you often put forward. The thousand-year-long darkness may end instantly, but how will the foul odour in a room, which has been kept closed for a thousand years, go off ? The task is not quite that easy. *Sadhana* (*) has to be done."

( 10 )

**MA is above grief—unique**

Down with a virulent attack of small-pox, Bholanath (†) breathed his last in MA's presence at Kishenpur (Dehra Dun) Ashram on 6th May 1938. On that very day, I got intimation at New Delhi, through Sadhan Brahmachari, that Bholanath had desired to see me. Next morning, on my arrival at Kishenpur

* *Sadhana* is spiritual practice, in the shape of *puja* (worship), *japa* (silent repetition of God's name), *dhyana* (meditation), *bhajana* (singing praise and glory of God) or *keertan* (singing God's name).

† Bholanath was MA's husband. (See foot-note, p. 2.)

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Ashram, I learnt that Bholanath had passed away and his body had been consigned in the Ganges at Hardwar, in the previous night. I saw MA, engaged in conversation with a number of elderly local ladies in the verandah of the outhouses of the Ashram building. After about an hour, MA came to us, her sons, who had assembled in the main building. MA said,—"How can these ladies console me ? They themselves were lamenting and grieving before me. On the contrary, I consoled and pacified them. How can I grieve ? I can see clearly where the soul was and where it was gone." She further added, "The sentiment with which you marry—no vibrations of that sentiment ever existed in this body". That no trace of the natural, unrestrainable animal instinct is to be found in MA's purest-ever person is inconceivable, yet quite true. That is how she is totally free from attachment, and hence above grief. For this reason alone, MA is unparalleled, unique.

( 11 )

**MA appeared (in subtle form) and blessed a dying child**

While talking to us, her sons, at Kishenpur (Dehra Dun) Ashram on 7th May 1938 (see



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previous page), MA started to tell us about persons, at whose death she had been present. Taking advantage of the situation, I submitted to MA : "*Ma*, I have heard that you were present at the death of Kshitish (*), Jatish Da's (p. 10) brother. Will you tell us all about the event ?" MA narrated as follows : "With a *lota* (water-pot) in hand, I was proceeding to the lavatory in Sachi Babu's (p. 35) house at Entally (Calcutta). I perceived that Kshitish was dying. Instantly, from this my body, another body (form) emerged, went and stood at Khitish's bed-side at Ballygunge. His *Ishta* (form of God, chosen for worship and meditation) was Child-Krishna. From that body of mine, emerged the form of his *Ishta* and gave him *darshan*." Saying that much, MA suddenly restrained herself and said, "This I have so far told nobody. I had only hinted this to his wife."

* Khitish Guha, brother of Jatish Da (p. 10), was, by profession, a Contractor. He had built a house on Park Side Road, Ballygunge. Functions described in Chapter 3 (p. 32-33) were held in the upper-storey hall in the house. All the three brothers (Jatish, Khitish and Nitish) and their entire families were ardent devotees of MA. Kshitish's second son, Nepal (S. K. Guha) has been serving as Honorary Auditor for Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha for many years. His son-in-law, Dwijen Nag, a prosperous businessman, held *Geeta Jayanti* and other functions at his two new houses at Ballygunge, at which MA was graciously present.

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When I next came to Calcutta after that date (7. 5. 38), I made enquiry about what exactly MA had hinted to Khitish's wife. I was told that shortly after Kshitish expired, MA came to his house (p. 32) and consoled his bitterly-mourning wife, in the following terms : "Don't grieve ; your husband has attained *sat gati* (blissful state)."

( 12 )

**MA is mother of the poor as well**

Sometimes I heard whispers complaining that MA was mother only to the well-to-do people. How false that complaint was, I realised one day, on witnessing MA's remarkably generous behaviour in an assembly of her devotees on the roof of the three-storeyed building of Chittaranjan Girls' School at Tollygunge (Calcutta). Many devotees of MA, men and women, were present. Two old women, clad in dirty, tattered clothes, who were evidently beggars, got up to the roof and were making their way through the crowd towards MA. They were obstructed by a male devotee. The beggar women were excited. They were loudly exclaiming, "We want to go to MA." On hearing their cry, MA called them, saying

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'*Ma*, come to me', '*Ma*, come to me'. As they came near her, MA fondly got them seated on her both laps and calmed them, by repeating the entreaty,—'*Ma*, don't be angry'. In this way, MA appeased them quickly. Finally, the two poor old beggar-women were given some fruits, before they bowed down to MA in deep reverence and departed with smile on their faces.

## (13)

### How MA quelled a terrible famine

In 1943, during the last World War, a terrible famine visited United Bengal. Hundreds of famished families from near and remote villages flocked into Calcutta in hectic quest for food. Here and there, corpses of victims of malnutrition and starvation could be seen at street-corners in both northern and southern parts of Calcutta. Starved men, women and children were begging for *phan*—the watery part of boiled rice, which is normally thrown away,—wailing piteously from door to door and, all day long and till late hours at night. Crowds of beggars who were fed with liquid gruel (of rice and pulses boiled together) by charitable persons and relief-organisations, went on swelling. The situation was

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plainly beyond control of both the Government and the people. At this critical stage, it struck me that I should proceed to Almora Ashram, acquaint MA with the mounting misery of the people and seek her divine aid towards easing the catastrophic situation. It was evening when I arrived at Almora Ashram one day. There was a small group of intimate devotees sitting around MA. After making due obeisance, I submitted to MA,—"*Ma*, I have so far never asked you for any favour. But today I have to appraise you of the miserable condition of famished poor people of Bengal. I earnestly pray that you may take effective steps to allay people's untold suffering". On hearing my prayer, a rare gloom appeared to darken our MA's ever-bright, mirthful countenance. I never found Anandamayee MA so cheerless as she looked at the time. She was visibly moved. In a serious mood, she enquired of the devotees present, who among them would volunteer to proceed to Bengal to take up relief-work. Two noble devotees, I distinctly remember, responded favourably with commendable readiness. Mukti Baba, then over sixty years old, said, "*Ma*, I shall go. I was in the Ramkrishna Mission. I did a lot of relief-work in my young days".

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Sadhan Brahmachari said, "*Ma*, I am prepared to go, if only you will permit me". "If by sacrificing my life, I can save a single person, I shall consider myself blessed", he added. Finally, however, MA told Gurupriya Didi (foot-note, p. 10) to see how many new *dhotis* she had in stock. It was found that she had eight pieces in stock. At MA's instance, the pieces were all packed into a small bundle and handed over to me. She also ordered me to take a sum of Rs. 200 from the Ashram. She asked me to contribute the amount to any centre in Calcutta, where the poor were being fed. She also told me to have the *dhotis* distributed among the poor through the same centre. On my return to Calcutta with MA's gifts, I was surprised to find that the situation had remarkably improved. No more starvation-deaths occurred in Calcutta. The heart-rending wails of starving beggars were no longer heard. I, however, carried out MA's orders to the letter by contributing the amount and handing over the *dhotis* for distribution at the centre run at the residence of Rai Bahadur Suren Banerjee (retired Income-tax Commissioner) on Southern Avenue, Ballygunge.

Thus, through insignificant token gifts, MA miraculously quelled the terrible famine.

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(14)

**MA's generous forgiveness**

In June 1948, MA left Calcutta for Puri (Orissa). Along with many other devotees, I attended Howrah railway station to see MA off. Standing on the platform in front of MA's compartment, I noticed that my both daughters, Chhabi and Moni, had boarded the train to accompany MA to Puri. I had no knowledge that they were going to Puri in MA's company. Normally, I should have been delighted to learn that through MA's beneficent good wishes they had got the most rare and covetable opportunity to accompany her to Puri. But instead, I fell a victim to egotism and anger. I shall not be able to recall and repeat all the irrelevant nonsense I talked to MA, complaining about what I thought was wrong on her part. The purport of all that I arrogantly said to her was just this : she had not acted rightly by taking my daughters with herself without my knowledge. Later, in cooler mind, I wondered who at that time gave me the authority to judge the propriety or otherwise of MA's dealings with my daughters. It was clear that my extreme egotism and extra-keen sense of a father's responsibility had disturbed my mental balance at the moment and I

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had totally forgotten MA's boundless greatness and abundant grace for me and all members of my entire family. Strangely enough, for this abnormal conduct of mine, MA did not rebuke me at all, only because she did not like to humiliate me in the presence of so many other devotees, who assembled on the platform. With a gracious, dignified smile, she simply ignored my gross misconduct. Before the train started, all of us bowed down to MA and took leave of her, one by one. When the train sped away with MA, my remorse for that arrogant attitude of mine, gave me intolerable pain. After a few days, when my daughters returned home in the company of a Brahmacharini, deputed by MA, the Brahmacharini said to me,—"MA has asked me to enquire if you have got back your daughters". On securing MA's foregiveness in that unthinkable manner, the pain of remorse for my misconduct was intensified. After this, day after day, I have shed copious tears and begged for MA's forgiveness, in the language of Arjuna (in the Geeta), when he was overwhelmed by a vision of *vishwaroop* (cosmic form) as quoted below :

(*English translation is S. Radhakrishnan's*)

"For whatsoever I have spoken in rashness

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to Thee, thinking that Thou art my companion and unaware of this Thy greatness, O Krishna, O Yadava, O Comrade, out of my negligence or may be through fondness, and for whatsoever disrespect was shown to Thee in jest, while at play or on the bed or seated or at meals, either alone or in the presence of others, I pray, O Unshaken One, forgiveness from Thee, the Immeasurable. ..... Therefore, and prostrating my body before Thee, Adorable Lord, I seek Thy grace. Thou, O Lord, shouldst bear with me as a father with his son, as a friend with his friend, as a lover with his beloved."

At length, I consoled myself, thinking that my arrogance on that occasion raised its ugly head in order to have it smashed for good by the massive, crushing blow of MA's generous and unique forgiveness. "All that occurs according to MA's irresistible will must prove beneficial for all concerned", I concluded.

(15)

**MA granted darshan at odd hour**

Toward the end of December 1946, accompanied by both of my daughters, Chhabi and Moni, I had been to Ahmedabad, where MA was residing in a beautiful, spacious tent, pitched in the

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compound of Munsah Bhavan, a palatial building belonging to Munsahs (wealthy mill-owners). We were accommodated in the Munsah Bhavan. I had to return to Calcutta *via* Delhi, leaving my daughters with MA at Ahmedabad. To save time, I wanted to travel from Ahmedabad to Delhi, by air. I was to leave for Ahmedabad Airport at about 4 a.m. As MA was in an indifferent state of health in those days, I felt sure that I could not possibly have her *darshan* and blessings at that odd hour. At about 10 p. m., while parting from her, I said to her sorrowfully, —"*Ma*, I am to start towards the end of the night. There is no possibility of my having your *darshan* at that hour". MA said, "Why not ? Before your departure, just come to the door of the tent and call me. Whoever may be attending on me, will open the door and let you in". According to MA's advice, I arrived at the door of MA's tent at about 3-40 a. m. and cried out '*Ma*' in a low voice. Instantly, the door was opened and I was taken in. So, I had the much-yearned-for opportunity of bowing down to MA and receiving her blessings just before my departure, through MA's unbounded grace.

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(16)

**MA needs no body-guard**

Pakistan was created in the month of July 1947. In October, Naru Bhai (an ardent devotee of MA of Berhampur) intended to take MA to his native village Boda (Dist. Jalpaiguri), which was in East Pakistan (now Bangla Desh), on the occasion of Durga Puja, which he wanted to celebrate at his ancestral house at Boda. As I thought that it would not be safe for MA to go to East Pakistan unescorted, I secured MA's permission and went with her party as a self-appointed escort. At Boda, on all three Puja days, every evening, there was a gathering of a fairly large number of villagers—both Hindus and Moslems—in the pandal, where Puja was celebrated. After the assembly broke up at night on the second day, MA repaired to her cottage and reported to me,—"*Baba*, it was good that you were not present in the pandal tonight. Some of the young Moslems were putting to me crooked and cornering questions. An elderly Moslem gentleman, a school-teacher, protested. He said, "I won't allow you to put such odd and objectionable questions to MA. If you want to have some doubts resolved in respect of religious practices, you may put straight-

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forward questions to MA and she will reply". On hearing this report from MA, I realised that MA was self-protected and never needed any body-guard.

(17)

**MA's keen concern for my health**

One evening, in April 1951, when I was in New Delhi, MA was present at a gathering held on the green lawn in front of Dr. J. K. Sen's house, on Hanuman Road. At any such gathering, if I got the opportunity, I invariably occupied a seat close to MA. But on that day, as the crowd was rather enormous, I had to stand at a good distance from MA and was intently having her *darshan*. All of a sudden, one of the girl students of Varanasi *Kanyapeetha* (Girls' College), who was seated near MA, came to me and said that MA wanted me to see her. When I went to MA, she said,—"Tomorrow evening, I shall proceed by train towards Punjab. I shall board the train at Gaziabad. You should go to Delhi Junction station, get into the First Class compartment, in which a berth is reserved for me and travel with me up to Meerut". I understood that MA wanted to talk to me confidentially on some matter. I duly went to Delhi

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Junction station, purchased a First Class ticket for Meerut and got into the compartment in which a berth had been reserved for MA. She had gone by car to some place in Gaziabad town. From there she came to Gaziabad railway station and occupied the berth reserved for her. I sat near her. While travelling, MA said to me,—"*Baba*, you look much pulled down. You should proceed to Varanasi, as early as possible, stay at the Ashram and place yourself under the treatment of Dr. Gopal Das Gupta". I got down from the train at Meerut. Returning to New Delhi, I arranged to procced to Varanasi, the very next day. At Varanasi Ashram, I was accommodated in the octagonal room adjoining the old hall (since pulled down owing to scouring action of the Ganges). Through three windows of the small room, the Ganges was clearly visible. In this room, I could hear the soft, sweet music of the flowing Ganges day and night. Under MA's orders, I was put under Dr. Das Gupta's effecive treatment. Special diet and milk were also arranged for me. I stayed here for twenty-one days, during which I completely recouped my impaired health.

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(18)

**MA soothed her disconsolate child**

In May 1951, under MA's order, I went to Ambala (Punjab) to attend her Birthday Anniversary ceremonies. At the close of the ceremonies, MA was due to proceed to Amritsar, by car. After MA took her seat in the car, the car waited for over thirty minutes. A good many tall Punjabi ladies gathered round the car and kept on making obeisance to MA, one by one. Standing behind the several rows of these stalwart ladies, I was unable to catch a glimpse of any limb of MA, sitting in the car. Getting near her and making obeisance were out of question. Leaving me in that piteous condition, when the car started and soon moved out of sight, I could hardly control the wail in my heart or the tears gushing out of my eyes. I was due to leave Ambala after two hours. Before departure, I wanted to take meal. For that purpose, I entered a restaurant. While sitting at meal, I had to take out my handkerchief from my pocket and wipe off tears repeatedly. After this, I was returning to the college hostel, where I was accommodated, to arrange my bedding and suitcase and proceed to railway station. On my way to the hostel,

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however, I chanced to see MA's car coming from the hostel. When the car came near me, I had a clear *darshan* of MA. Standing on the roadside, as I bowed down to MA with folded hands, MA smiled and nodded sidewise in acceptance of my salutation. MA was all this time moving about in various parts of Ambala by car, and could leave the city, only after giving me her *darshan* and thereby soothing my disconsolate, wailing heart.

( 19 )

**MA healed an aged ailing child**

During 1972-73, for about a whole year, I suffered badly from chronic bronchitis and asthma. For nearly ten months at a stretch, I could not stretch on bed for sleeping. I had to sleep as best as I could, in a sitting posture. On intimating MA about my protracted illness, she advised treatment by some reputed physician. Accordingly, I went to Calcutta on 2nd March 1973 and stayed at our rented upper flat at Bhawanipur (South Calcutta). A junior physician (Visiting Fee Rs. 16) and a senior physician (Visiting Fee Rs. 64) were called in. Their joint treatment for a full week only aggravated my condition. Under these circumstances, I was extremely anxious to have MA's *darshan* and

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blessings. Most fortunately, MA had come to Calcutta some days ago and in the morning on 11th March, quite unexpectedly, she came by car near my residence and sent for me. I was confined to bed. With the assistance of a stout, young friend, I came down on the adjoining street and saw MA seated in the car. With the usual sweet smile on her face, she asked me,—"*Baba*, how are you doing?" With a counter-smile on my face, I replied,—"I am doing well, but how are you doing?" "I am just as you find me", she replied. Now, opening the door of the car, and laying my head on MA's affectionate lap, I made a deep obeisance to her. MA spontaneously and repeatedly placed her both hands on my head and showered an abundance of blessings. From that very day, the same two physicians' joint treatment—without any change in prescription —started proving effective. Staying on at Calcutta, I had the treatment continued for three months, recovered completely and returned to this house at Kalyani, which was hallowed by the holy touch of MA's feet over eight years ago on 11th July 1965. (see p. 99). Now (September 1973), I am engaged in writing this book.

[ The book was originally written in Bengali. Seven Chapters were completed in 1973. The eighth Chapter was finally written in 1976. This English Edition (translated freely from Bengali) was also written in 1976. The two manuscripts (Bengali and English) were sent to the Printers early in 1978. ]

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CHAPTER 8

## MA'S TWIN MESSAGE AND ANSWERS TO FOUR QUERIES

In Bhaiji's SAT VANI, exactly one hundred and one (101) different instructions of MA have been compiled. At the end of his MOTHER AS REVEALED TO ME, twelve (12) distinct instructions of MA are printed. In the two books, MATRI VANI and WORDS OF MA ANANDAMAYEE (both issued by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha), many more of MA's sound instructions and clear expositions on several abstruse, esoteric topics have been published. In Gurupriya Didi's (*) SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE (17 parts), Late Amulya Datta Gupta's SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE PRASANGA (6 parts) and Ganga-Samiran's ANANDAMAYEE MA (all in Bengali). MA's numerous instructions, explanations and answers to questions have been brought to light. But from all these instructions, explanations and answers, which together form a formidable mass of literature, it is extremely

* For information on Bhaiji and Gurupriya Didi, see foot-note on p. 10.



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difficult to get at the crux of MA's teaching and select just one or two of MA's soundest instructions, which form MA'S universal message (or messages) for whole humanity and for all time to come. In this concluding Chapter, I shall clearly and tersely state just two of MA's instructions, which constitute her twin message and discuss them in some details.

FIRST MESSAGE. *A seeker or spiritual aspirant can achieve God-realisation through service to humanity, provided the service is rendered to God in man.*

According to this message, a father or mother will rear (serve) a son as *Gopal* or Child-Krishna, a daughter as *Gouri* or Child-Durga. A wife will serve the husband as *Parama Pati* (Supreme Lord or God). A husband will look upon the wife as Durga, the Universal Mother. In MA's own vocabulary, "*Yatra jiva tattra Shiva/Yatra nari tattra Gouri*, i.e., *Shiva* (God) dwells in *jiva* (every living being), *Gouri* (Universal Mother) dwells in *nari* (every female form). God is the One Master—I am a mere servant—I shall keep on serving the One Master. This should be the guiding spirit of a house-holder seeking God-realisation. The spiritual aspirant must bear this in mind all the time and

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in all spheres of work. Thus, God can be realised by performing all actions with the spirit of serving God in man. In the eighteenth Chapter of the *Geeta*, we find the following aphorism:

"He, from Whom all beings arise, and by Whom all this is pervaded,—by worshipping Him through performance of his own duty, does man attain perfection." —*Radhakrishnan.*

In the Eleventh Canto of the *Shrimad Bhagavat*, we find that Shri Krishna gave the following finale of his lengthy, illuminating discourse to Uddhava, his most intimate devotee:

"Of all the ways of attaining me, the best is to feel my presence in all beings, with mind, word and body".

Chaitanya Dev also has said, that in the path of devotion, the seeker cannot attain success unless he has compassion for *jiva* (every living being).

Swami Vivekananda too has declared: "He is before you in numerous forms. Ignoring them, where do you seek God? He, who has compassion for *jiva* (every living being) is indeed serving God."

The principle of serving God in humanity is applicable in all cases. Going by it becomes

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easy and delightful with practice. He, the Master, is in all, "seated in all hearts". So, nobody can be maltreated. The father or mother, who will serve children with the consciousness that God is in them, will not be able to beat them out of anger. Inspired by this noble sentiment, the teacher at school will not be swayed by fury or impatience and inflict any severe corporal punishment on wayward students.

The influence of the maxim, '*Yatra jiva tattra shiva/Yatra nari tattra Gouri*", which MA frequently repeats, is clearly discernible in all her behaviours. She has often declared to all her devotees,—"You have for me not even a minute fraction of the love that I have for you." It has been practicable for her, because she unmistakably sees God (*i.e.*, herself) in everyone of us. So, she can love everybody fully. Her love is indeed boundless.

This feeling the presence of God in all is the most effective binding or uniting force in every sphere of human activity,—at schools and universites, in farms and factories, in villages and towns, everywhere. When I am exalted by this feeling, if anybody abuses or blames me, I shall have no anger. On the contrary,

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I shall think why I am abused or blamed. Have I done something wrong? Thinking thus, I can calm myself and make myself fault-free. If all can act on this principle, there will be no misunderstanding, rancour, jealousy or rivalry. Friendship and spirit of cooperation will grow. The society will be united, powerful and progressive. In this First Message, we find a harmonious blending of the three-fold path of *karma* (action), *jnana* (knowledge) and *bhakti* (devotion).

SECOND MESSAGE. *God-realisation is attainable through 'japa'*. This message too is not new. In the *Geeta* we come across the pithy declaration, "*Yajnanam japa yajnosmi*" (among various forms of sacrifice I am *japa*), that is, *japa* is the best of all forms of sacrifice. *Japa* implies silent repetition of name (God's name) or *mantra*. This *japa* must be done secretly—such that the lips will not move, nor will any vibration be perceptible at the throat,—that is our MA's specific direction. Now, the question arises—which name or *mantra* shall I take up for *japa*? The prevalent tradition in India has been that one should take up for *japa* the name or *mantra* that *Guru* (spiritual preceptor) prescribes. On this point, our MA stipulates some-

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thing which is unprecedented, unique. I never heard about it before, nor read about it in any scripture. She says,—"Take up for *japa* any name you like best". This name, whatever it is, you should repeat inaudibly and imperceptibly (and so far as possible) at every breath—when inhaling or exhaling—at all times,—while sitting, standing, walking, eating, drinking or whatever you are doing. Some of the names I have heard from MA, are : Hari, Rama, Krishna, Gopal, Govinda, Ma, Shiva, Shankara, Durga, Kali, Tara, Radha-Krishna, Sita-Rama, 'Radhe Radhe Krishna Krishna Hare Rama Hare Hare' and 'Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare'. Some of the *mantras*, used for *japa* by MA's devotees are : 'Om namo Narayanaya', 'Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya' and 'Om Ma'. MA says,—"All names are His names, all forms are His forms. Whatever name you choose for *japa*, it will lead you to the final goal of God-realisation". She elucidates this point with a very suitable example. She says : "A baby, unable to utter '*Ma*', cries out 'Oa', 'Oa'. Its mother knows that it is calling her. She hurries to the baby and meets its needs. When this baby is able to talk, the mother teaches it

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that she should be called '*Ma*'. Likewise, whatever name you use for *japa* at the start, God, the Universal Father, Mother or Master, knows that you are calling Him. In due time, He responds, and appears, if need be, as a *Guru* in human form or in dream or in a spiritual vision and changes the name for a more suitable name or *mantra*".

The freedom allowed (or rather recommended) by MA for any new seeker or beginner in the path of spirituality to choose his own name of God relieves him of the grave and risky task of searching for a suitable Guru. He is thus encouraged to start on the long journey any day with any name he likes best. He should patiently keep on practising *japa* of the name of his own choice, until God Himself will provide him with a suitable Guru or help him forward by other means. It is up to God to see him safely reaching the haven of God-realisation, even as He filled his mother's breasts with life-giving milk before he was born.

I shall now conclude this Chapter with the Answers to *four* common Queries put to MA by her devotees. These Answers, I feel sure, will resolve some doubts lurking in the minds of many readers.

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QUERY 1. *Will 'japa' practised when the mind is restless benefit the seeker ?*

ANSWER. MA has said, "Even if you are unable to concentrate your mind on *japa*, the name you will mentally repeat has its own intrinsic power. So it will take you forward, just as a flame will burn you, if you happen to touch it totally unawares". Ramkrishna Dev has said, "God's name will do you good, if you utter it 'knowingly', 'unknowingly' or even 'by mistake'. Vijoy Krishna Goswami has said, "If you have aversion for God's name, the remedy is to persistently mentally repeat the name". Guru Nanak has said, "God's name is the one sure cure for all maladies".

QUERY 2. *Which is more effective, 'seva' (service) or 'japa' ?*

ANSWER (*). Some persons do not like to sit down and do *japa*. For them, it is advisable to purify their mind through *seva* (service of God in man). There is also the question that unless the mind is purified to some extent through *japa*, *seva*, as service of God in man, cannot be done in a proper manner. *Seva* and *japa* are both

* Gurupriya Devi's SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE (Bengali), Fifteenth part, p. 246.

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necessary. One is supplementary to the other. Together, they form an integral *sadhana* (*).

QUERY 3. *Is MA ever angry with her child ?*

ANSWER (†). MA does not get angry. But in view of the child's welfare, sometimes behaves as if she is angry. By that, the child is benefitted, never harmed.

QUERY 4. *Many devotees of God are found to suffer afflictions. What are the reasons for such suffering ? What are its effects ?*

ANSWER (‡). God often gives a light affliction and thereby prevents a much graver affliction. Affliction too is one of His many forms. Through affliction, He often attracts *jiva* (living being) towards Himself. Affliction is also an opportunity. Dire difficulty demonstrates to man how weak and helpless he is. When he finds that nothing can be done through his own efforts, an urge comes for remembering God and resorting to prayer. When in difficulty, man naturally turns towards God. He does so, because God

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* Integral *sadhana* means balanced spiritual practices leading to God-realisation.

† Gurupriya Devi's SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE (Bengali), Fifteenth Part, p. 31.

‡ Ganga-Samiran's ANANDAMAYEE MA (Bengali), pages 114-115.

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prevents and helps him to overcome difficulties. Those, who can convert an affliction into an opportunity for remembering God and offering prayers to God,—for them, affliction is a trusted friend.

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